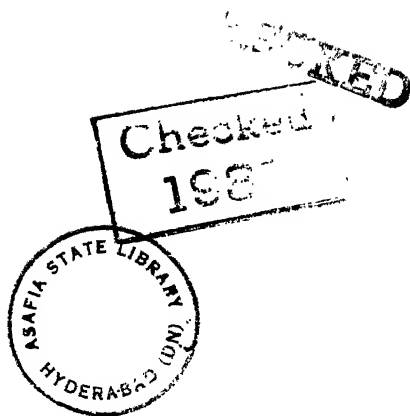


Poems: Volume Three

by Arthur Symons

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KNAVE OF HEARTS

*You praise in me the verse that brings
A savour only life can give ;
This book is what I thought of things
Before I had begun to live.*

*Life, the dice, has dropt into idle hands to be tossed ;
Luckless hand, give me luck, before the game has been lost !
Life as a game of cards is shuffled with queens and kings :
Knave of hearts, be my friend, for you are the mover of things !*

November 17, 1896.

TO
RHODA



THE BROTHER OF A WEED

I

I HAVE shut up my soul with vehemence
Against the world, and opened every sense
That I may take, but not for love or price,
The world's best gold and frankincense and spice.
I have delighted in all visible things
And built the world of my imaginings
Out of the splendour of the day and night,
And I have never wondered that my sight
Should serve me for my pleasure, or that aught
Beyond the lonely mirror of my thought
Lived, and desired me. I have walked as one
Who dreams himself the master of the sun,
And that the seasons are as seraphim
And in the months and stars bow down to him.

II

And I have been of all men loneliest,
And my chill soul has withered in my breast
With pride and no content and loneliness.
And I have said : To make our sorrow less
Is there not pity in the heart of flowers,
Or joy in wings of birds that might be ours ?
Is there a beast that lives, and will not move
Toward our poor love with a more lovely love ?
And might not our proud hopeless sorrow pass
If we became as humble as the grass ?
I will get down from my sick throne where I
Dreamed that the seasons of the earth and sky,
The leash of months and stars, were mine to lead,
And pray to be the brother of a weed.

III

I am beginning to find out that there
Are beings to be pitied everywhere.
Thus when I hear, at night, an orphaned sheep
Crying as a child cries, how can I sleep ?
Yet the night-birds are happy, or I seem
To hear them in the hollow of a dream,
Whispering to each other in the trees,
And through the window comes a leaping breeze
That has the sea-salt in it. When I hear
Crying of oxen, that, in deadly fear,
Rough men, with cruel dogs about them, drive
Into the torture-house of death alive,
How can I sit under a tree and read
A happy idle book, and take no heed ?

IV

Why is not sorrow kinder to all these
That have short lives and yet so little ease ?
Life is but anxious fear to lambs and hens,
And even the birds are enemies of men's
Because they rob a cherry-tree ; the mole
Cannot be left in quiet in his hole
Though he is softer than a velvet gown ;
The caterpillar is soon trodden down
Under a boot's ignorant heel, though he
Is woven finer than old tapestry.
The worm is close and busy and discreet,
The foe of no man living : no man's feet
Spare him, if he but crawl into the sun.
Who can be happy, while these things are done ?



V

Why are the roses filled with such a heat,
And are so gaudy and riotously sweet,
When any wind may snap them from the stem
Or any little green worm canker them ;
Why is the dawn-delivered butterfly
So arrogant, knowing he has to die
Before another dawn has waked his brother ?
Why do the dragon-flies outshoot each other
With such an ardour, knowing that the noon
Will put away his shining arrows soon ?
Why is the seed that, having got to corn,
Must come to bread, so eager to be born ?
Why is it that the joy of living gives
Forgetfulness to everything that lives ?

June 4-7—14, 1907.

THE PICTURE

O, if I did not love you with a love
Older than sight, this should have been enough
Seen once, and in a picture, so, to dream
A lifetime over ; for a thing you seem
Made of the wilfulness of all delight,
Happy as singing, grave with joy : the light
Soars from your shoulder to envelop you,
Wing-like, and the desire of flight shines through.
I would have lived, for your sake, in a sleep,
Shut from all outer faces, nestling deep
In the dim heart of dreams your secret face.
Time would have waked me at our meeting-place
Before the years of the world were at an end,
Because I waited. Now, O love, O friend,
My help, my hope, my more than memory,
There is one thing time cannot take from me :
That I have known you, not in dreams, but warm
With life and wild with love, and felt the storm
Of pulses panting to your finger-tips,
And heard your heart, beat naked at my lips.
Have I not hungered, have I not been fed,
For love's sake, love, with that immaculate bread
Which is the heavenlier manna of my drouth,
Your body, sweet as manna to the mouth
Which now gives God thanksgiving without shame ?
O flame of love, and light within the flame,
And pure in body and soul as that desire
Which is in heaven the light, on earth the fire,

The Picture

Come, for your picture calls to me, O come
Ere longing lapse into a martyrdom ;
Come, in what darkeſt veil you please, or white
Beyond all whiteness in your body's light ;
And bid me kneel and kiss your feet, or give
My body and soul at laſt their leave to live.
Yet, if all gifts I dare deſire, you pour
Yet freelier forth, I will not love you more ;
Nor, if your will withhold me happiness,
I will not, for I cannot, love you leſs.

April 11, 1906.

UNATTAINED DELIGHT

O UNATTAINED, imaginable delight,
To be the arms of rest to you all night,
All the long, swift, uncounted, endless hours !
And for this heaven past hoping to be ours
Simply as sleep, and for kind sleep to come
To both our breathings, like a quiet home !
Scarce I dare think, for fear, of happiness,
Lest being known, I find it to be less
Than that I dreamed ; and scarcely I dare dream
Even of sleep, lest that too, coming, seem
Less than perfection of an ecstasy.
I call my flying thoughts all back to me,
Soothing their wings, and murmuring soft words
To still them, all my flying thoughts like birds.
I wait, veiling my eyelids ; I control
Even hope, and the impatience of the soul.

December 8, 1900.

BEAUTY'S STRANGENESS

THE world is full of you : I wander in vain ;
I cannot lose you : for you come again,
Here in deep eyes, and there in wandering hair,
Or mournful cheeks ; and always you are there
When I begin to dream of some escape
From dreams of you : for all dreams take your shape
You will not lose me : know, and be consoled,
If you desire, as you desired of old,
Still to be loved when you have ceased to love.
These eyes remember, and those see you move
Wherever beauty's strangeness comes to keep
My weary hope from the relief of sleep.

ARLES, *October* 6, 1898.

LOVE IN ACTION

How could, how should I tell you of
That first beginning of our love
In action? rather let me tell
How Eve was formed or Adam fell.
A mighty adoration came
Out of a smile to be a flame,
And the first breathings of desire
Were quickly blown into a fire
That took on both our bodies such
An intimate hold it seemed to touch
The soul of either to the quick,
And christen our vows catholic.
Then the beginning being over,
There was no more but love and lover,
And of that eternal minute
Know but that life and death were in it.
Only, that being passed, I seem
Half to remember from a dream
Her panting breath across my eyes
And the whole amorous breast of sighs,
Her damp cheek and abandoned hair,
And mouth relaxed to that despair
Which is the shipwreck of each sense
In overflowing indolence;
And, in no dream, but even as one
Who wakes out of oblivion,
The quieting of aching throes,
Into a rapture of repose,
When eyes re-open and lips close.

July 8, 1907.

THE WIND

LAST night, lying awake, I heard the wind
Going down the leafy valley to the sea,
And tearing at the thatch with many hands.
And I lay still, knowing that you were there,
Dreaming kind dreams that laugh themselves awake
With morning ; and I felt the irresistible
Enemy, the wind of multitude, the hands
That tear and batter at my rest, and drag
My soul out of its lonely hiding-place,
Go by ; and I lay still, knowing you were there,
And hearing in the dark your tranquil breath
Evenly through the tumult ; and your peace
Has never brought more strength to me than when
Last night, lying awake, I heard the wind.

September 24, 1905.

THE STREETS

I LOVED the streets because
I feared myself and sought
In the crowd's hurry a pause
And sanctuary from thought.

My sanctuary is such
Now that I dwell with love
I cannot have too much
Of self or thought enough.

And my tired pilgrim feet
Have no more need to roam :
Why seek in every street
That face which is my home ?
November 28, 1906.

FEAR

My love makes me afraid,
For when I am alone,
My fate being my own,
I have all myself in aid.

But with yourself you bring
Fear, and he will not quit
So dear and exquisite
And perishable a thing.

The certainty that held
Before my breast a targe,
Now you are in my charge
Shrivels, and is dispelled.

I cast about you arms
Weak with solicitude
That were in solitude
Invulnerable to harms.

And I go wondering
If fear will ever quit
So dear and exquisite
And such a priceless thing.

January 18, 1907.

THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE

If, when the Spirit and the Bride say Come !
I yet be found lingering by the way,
Even as I linger while it is to-day,
Wait thou, my God ! although I journey from
My home on earth and from thy other home,
I will remember at the last, and say :
Thou who wast near when I was far away,
Take me : the Spirit and the Bride say Come !

Thou hast held me in the hollow of thy hand,
And I have fought against thy power ; thou hast kept
Thy watch over my spirit while it slept,
Dreaming against thy wisdom ; I have planned
Ways of escape, but thou hast overswept,
Like loving water, all my dykes of sand.
November 9, 1901.

THE TWELVE-THORNED CROWN

WOUNDED for our transgression, she must bear
The crucifying, and the twelve-thorned crown,
And lay her secret pride shamefully down,
That man may live, who is her lord and heir,
Son of her travail, father of her pains,
For his delight a bleeding sacrifice ;
Nor will those wounds wounded but once suffice :
She suffers, but the twelve-thorned crown remains.

Woman, when in the sacrament I take
The bread, your body, and the wine, your kiss,
I bid my body and soul remember this,
And humble themselves proudly for your sake,
And for the sacred blood that you have shed,
And for the shame those innocent pangs yet bring :
I do adore the crown of suffering
That sets a crown of glory on your head.

November 19, 1901.

LESBIA IN OLD AGE

You see these shrunken arms, this chin,
A sharp bone wrapped about with rags
Of scrawled and wrinkled parchment skin ;
This neck now puckered into bags
Was seamless satin at the first ;
And this dry broken mouth a cup
Filled up with wine for all men's thirst ;
This sodden hair was lifted up
In coils that as a crown were curled
About a brow that once was low,
As any woman's in the world ;
And these two eyes of smouldering tow
That scarcely light me to this hearth
Were as two torches shaken out
To be a flame upon the earth.
What is it that he said about
Beauty I stole, to be my own,
All beauty's beauty ? Look at this :
Finger by finger, to the bone,
His lips and teeth would bite and kiss
These joints of these abhorred hands,
These cheeks that were not always thus ;
What was it that he said of sands
And stars that could not count for us
Our kisses ? Let us love and love,
My Lesbia : yes, and I shall live
A hungering, thirsting shadow of
That love I gave and could not give.

Lesbia in Old Age

I gave him pleasure, and I sold
To him and all men ; he is dead,
And I am infamous and old,
And yet I am not quieted.
Take off your curses from my soul :
Can not Catullus pity me
Although my name upon his scroll
Has brought him immortality ?
March 14, 1907.

HALLUCINATION

WHY is it that I see
Her burning web of hair ?
It burns and strangles me.
No, there is nothing there
But sunlight and cool air.

And yet I feel it, soft
And warm ; and now the wind
Brandishes it aloft.
But is it round my mind
Or round my body twined ?

I have a deadly fear
When I but think upon
That evil heart in her
Which for more power has gone
Into her hair alone.

She has an angel's face,
He will not enter there ;
But for his hiding-place,
His fortress and his lair,
Has gone into her hair.

There the beast laughs and sits
And twines his web to mesh
The soul into the wits,
The heart out of the flesh :
He twines his web afresh.

Hallucination

And I shall never know
If this too shining thing
The wind blows to and fro,
Mocking and comforting,
Is any living thing.

I know that I desire
With rapture and despair
To snatch the web of fire
Burning out of the air
And perish in her hair.

January 25, 1907.

THE SNAKE-SOUL

MIRIAM and I slept head by head,
Each alone in the harem bed ;
Wife though she was whom the Emir had wed,
He had taken a Jewess in her stead,

Miriam, when her soul was awake,
Had the dead eyes of a snake ;
Miriam's body would sway and take
The secret sliding ways of a snake.

I who have tended her in her pride,
I lay in the bed at her bedside ;
She never spoke and she never sighed
But lay as dead as if she had died.

Not a breath in her mouth would wake
That coiled slumber of the snake :
Where had her soul gone forth to take
Hate with poison of the snake ?

There was a cry, deathly wild.
And Miriam wakened up and smiled,
Cold, and quiet as a child :
I only knew that Miriam smiled.

Voices cried through the door : " Awake :
Her heart is bitten through by a snake ! "
" Let them come and let them take,
Here," Miriam said, " the snake ! "

November 20, 1907.

THE SERPENT

TO SAROJINI NAIDU

WHAT is it, Helen, to be wise,
What is it to have everything,
When some old secret in your eyes
Kings and wise men are questioning ?
Wisdom is heavy as a crown,
And kings desire to lay that down.

Is it the serpent, Lilith's spouse,
That before good and evil were
Guarded the apple in the boughs
For Eve to take, and after her
All women that like Eve will take
And eat their sustenance from the snake ;

Is it the serpent that looks through
Those eyes of death and wantonness ?
Wise men and kings, beholding you,
Shrink up to dust and nothingness.
Is it the serpent in your eyes
That is still lord in paradise ?

July 7, 1907.

FOR LE PENSEUR OF RODIN

(To be erected in Paris before the Pantheon.)

Out of the eternal bronze and mortal breath,
And to the glory of man, me Rodin wrought ;
Before the gates of glory and of death
I bear the burden of the pride of thought.

December 26, 1904.

ON THREE DRAWINGS OF RODIN

HERE are four women : look into each face.
The first one of the four is but a dream,
And she is Beauty ; next to her there seem
To lie two spawns of Satan in embrace.
And lastly Life, with a tremendous gesture,
Turns, and prepares to cast aside her vesture.

This is the triptych of three unknown things :
The dream, and the descent into deep hell,
And out of hell the fair ascent of wings.
These are three secrets which one man can tell
Because no wind of heaven shall efface
The smoke of hell from his effulgent face.

August 9, 1908.

THE MYSTERY OF JUDAS AND SATAN

(*Scaena. Suspendo in oleastro* JUDAS. *Apparet* SATHANAS.)

SATAN

Judas, wherefore hangeſt thou
On this pale wild-olive bough ?

JUDAS

Many hundred years have I
Hung there ; but I may not die.

SATAN

Thy bought soul give back to me
For thy ransom from the tree.

JUDAS

Leave me, Satan ; get thee gone,
That my soul may thirſt alone.

SATAN

Judas, I will quench its drouth :
Pass it through thine aching mouth.

JUDAS

Never shall this soul accuſt
From its flaming prison burſt
Through the lips sealed up with drouth
That kissed Jesus on the mouth.

[*Repente* SATHANAS *in fumo exspirat.*

August 17, 1908.

THE DIALOGUE OF THE SOUL AND BODY

THE SOUL

Sinful Body, now repent :
For one moment thou art lent
To me, the Soul, to occupy :
Body, repent before thou die !

THE BODY

I the Body thee permit
As a guest to enter it ;
I the Master am and I
Mine own house do occupy.

If thou wouldst not have me sin,
Soul, why didst thou enter in ?
If I would a while carouse
Thou canst not shut me from my house.

If for my desire I bring
Some fair unreluctant thing
Who, being without guile,
Pleasureth me a certain while,

Thou, the Soul, must neighbour her,
And to her presence not demur ;
For She and She and She is spouse,
Ever welcome in my house.

The Dialogue of the Soul and Body

One fair chamber and one bed
Where we nightly so re-wed ;
Nakedness with nakedness
Casting off the body's dress.

Fearful, fair and fond delights,
Lustful dawns and wanton nights,
Every dear forbidden thing
The mind can to the body bring,

Each several rapture when the flesh
Wakes and dies and wakes afresh,
Ever joying in the glory
Of those that know Love's Purgatory.

Bitter, chiding soul, forgive
The body that it thus do live.

August 23, 1908.

JAPAN

TO YONE NOGUCHI.

THE butterfly,
The frailest of things,
Has colours that dye
With jewels its wings.

It is a flower,
A mist, a breath ;
Its life of an hour
Rejoices in death.

There went forth a word,
And the winged bright Japan
Had the heart of a sword
With the soul of a fan.

July 14, 1906.

TANAGRA

To Cavalieri dancing.

TELL me, Tanagra, who made
Out of clay so sweet a thing ?
Are you the immortal shade
Of a man's imagining ?
In your incarnation meet
All things fair and all things fleet.

Arrow from Diana's bow,
Atalanta's feet of fire,
Someone made you long ago,
Made you out of his desire.
Waken from the sleep of clay
And rise and dance the world away.

June 27, 1908.

TRISTAN'S SONG

IF this be love I die,
I die of hoping love,
That will not hence remove,
Nor will not all deny.

His sharp and bitter dart
Is fast within my side ;
Come, my old courage, hide
Thy death within thy heart.

I will not shrink although
This death in love there be :
She whom I love is she
Who is through love my foe.

October 18, 1905.

AT THE MORGUE

I AM afraid of death to-day,
For I have seen the dead,
Where, in the Morgue, they lie in bed,
And one dead man was laughing as he lay.

And that still laughter seemed to tell,
With its inaudible breath,
Of some ridiculous subterfuge of death,
Some afterthought of heaven or hell,

The last and the lost mystery,
Which, being known, had bred
Such cynic laughter in the dead,
A laughter that outlived mortality,

Ah, mortal to mere mortal breath,
This ultimate farce of things :
To have heard the laughter from the wings,
The coulisses of the comedy of death !

PARIS, *May* 27, 1894.

VILLA BORGHESE

In this dim alley of the ilexes
I walk in a delicious loneliness.
The plaintive water of the fountain drips
Like silence speaking out of a God's lips,
And like chill silence visible, I see
A faint smoke breathing upward mistily
Where dead leaves rise in incense, their sweet death,
Toward the frail life of dying leaves. The breath
Of that decay which is more delicate
Than the white breath of spring, the lonely state
Of lilies breathing in a quiet place,
Sweetens the air. I feel against my face,
Moist, stealthy, blown from where the leaves are thinned,
The kisses of the winter, in pale wind.
ROME, *January 1, 1897.*

AT SANT' ONOFRIO

To the Princess Doria.

OUR Lady of the violets,
That grew among the woods of heaven,
Before they pined to be your eyes,
Grown human in the sharp regrets
That shine as sweetly as the seven
Swords of Our Lady of the skies ;

Princess, I see you stand to-day
Smiling among your pallid folk
That on God's service come and go ;
Beholding, as from far away,
The sins of Rome go up like smoke,
Silent at Sant' Onofrio.

ROME, *January* 9, 1907.

GREY HOURS : NAPLES

THERE are some hours, when I seem so indifferent ; all
things fade

To an indifferent greyness, like that grey of the sky ;

Always at evening-ends, on grey days ; and I know not
why,

But life, and art, and love, and death, are the shade of
a shade.

Then, in those hours, I hear old voices murmur aloud,

And memory forgoes desire, too weary at heart for regret ;

Dreams come with beckoning fingers, and I forget to forget ;

The world as a cloud drifts by, or I drift by as a cloud.

NAPLES, *April* 6, 1897.

STORMY NIGHT : NAPLES

THE night was loud with wind, and the wind shone
With heavy feet trampling the dust-grey sea ;
The hill of fire obscure continually
Flowered to a rose, that flickered, and was gone.

All night I heard the wind go to and fro,
Scattering the petals of that rose of flame
With dawn a new rose wonderfully came,
I heard the dust-grey waters come and go.

All night those voices moaned about my mind
(O vain desire ! desire of vain repose !),
The wind that was in terror of that rose,
The sea that was in terror of the wind.

NAPLES, *April* 23, 1897.

EASTER NIGHT : NAPLES

TO-NIGHT I pity all poor human souls
For being human. This miraculous night,
When the white-clouded full moon aureoles
A space of shining water with pure light,

This Paschal night after the mandolins,
The organs, and the incense, and the wine,
The day of the redemption of man's sins,
This joyous day, and of all days divine,

Why is it that I see a long white host
Of bubbles floating on an idle breath,
And those bright colours that bedeck them most
Beckoning nearest to their soaring death ?

NAPLES, *April* 18, 1897.

VENICE

MINUET : *The Masque of the Ghosts.*

THE coloured dancing shadows creep
Like ghosts from a mysterious street ;
And Venice wakens out of sleep
At the sound of their feet.

Here Pulcinello solemn stands,
And the pale patient Pierrot shakes
His shivering shanks and starving hands,
And Columbine awakes.

She has forgotten him, and gay,
Runs past him towards the colonnades
Where the immortal masquers stay,
Unhappy shades.

Their aching hearts beneath their masks
Palpitate like caught butterflies ;
They move in their appointed tasks
With disappointed eyes.

The music of a minuet
Beckons to their unwilling feet ;
The light loves, they would fain forget,
The stately measures slowly beat.

Venice

Dear disappointed shades of joy
That lived merrily without thought,
Your hearts are turned into a toy
To be tossed and caught.

Venice, the tyrant of the years,
Commands you to perpetuate,
With listless feet and weary tears,
The sunken splendours of her state.

August 26, 1908.

VENICE

WATER and marble and that silentness
Which is not broken by a wheel or hoof ;
A city like a water-lily, less
Seen than reflected, palace wall and roof,
In the unfruitful waters motionless,
Without one living grass's green reproof ;
A city without joy or weariness,
Itself beholding, from itself aloof.

August 6, 1907.

NERVES OF NIGHT

THE stealthy and irresistible clouds are alone
With earth and sky ; hark, twilight flutterings,
The hurry and sigh of the bat's demure dim wings ;
See, a star that shakes through a cloud, and is gone.
Now there is silence, and only light enough
To see the dark by ; hush, in the trembling grass,
The breathing of night ; nay, hush, what tremors pass
Through the nerves of night to the trembling stars above ?
September 20, 1906.

SONG

THINK of nothing but the day :
Yesterday is dead and gone,
And to-morrow will not stay
Longer than another one.

Why should Time, that cannot mar
One triumphant rose's scent,
Sting our joys, because they are
Blossoms, fair not permanent ?

Any joy like any flower
Has its instant blossoming :
How can even Time have power
Over either perfect thing ?

December 22, 1906.

CAUTION FOR ALL LOVERS

WHEN I made love to you the other day,
And you were kind because the sky was blue,
How was it I remembered what to say?
You, when to come in answer to your cue?

I but repeat out of a tattered scrip
The words an author, long forgotten, wrote;
And you out of his stage-directions quote
The kisses that I find upon your lip.

June 28, 1907.

A SONG OF LOVE AND TIME

Nothing in the world is sure,
Do not be afraid of love :
The earth's waters shall remove,
The earth's hills shall not endure.

Why should love hurt over-long ?
Time the strength of love shall break.
Of a little sorrow make
Endless pleasure in a song.

How should love outlast a rhyme ?
Helen died, the deathless Greek.
Time is strong and love is weak :
Do not be afraid of time.

March 21, 1907.

ROSES

THERE is a perfumed garden that I know,
A garden all of winding white-rose ways,
Where only roses blow,
Where only memory strays ;
And down whose delicate pale alleys,
And warm delicious valleys,
I have often wandered for enchanted days :
There is a perfumed garden where my heart would go.

Within the white-rose garden that I love
There are two roses that I love the best,
Set in the midst thereof :
White roses are the rest.
And each cool dewy blossom that uncloses
Is redder than red roses.
Within the white-rose garden of her breast
To kiss the rosy-petalled roses that I love !
DIEPPE, *August* 13, 1895.

FAUVETTE

SHALL we remember both, Fauvette,
With all the memories of both,
A certain memory one were loth
To fancy either should forget ?

You danced like any Sainte Nitouche,
In that incredible quadrille ;
Your virgin cheeks without a *mouche*
Blushed at the lifting of a frill.

And through your grave and steady eyes
No conscious, curious tremors ran
Of naughty knowledge, nor surprise
At all the naughtiness of man.

But after, when we must have had
That little converse I recall,
When I was mystically mad,
And you a wholesome animal,

Well, though your cheeks without a *mouche*
Could scarcely boast of blushes still,
And that prim air of Sainte Nitouche
Had left you with the last quadrille,

At least you wondered then ! your eyes,
Those grave and steady eyes, began
To open in extreme surprise
At the extravagance of man.

Fauvette

Ah, you were sane and I was mad ;
Were it not better, after all,
To have left the soul apart, and had
The savour of the animal ?

Who knows ? Except that one were loth
To fancy either could forget
A certain memory of both,
Both should remember long, Fauvette.
PARIS, *May* 14, 1894.

PEAU D'ESPAGNE

INSINUATING monotone,
Why is it that you come to vex,
With your one word, a heart half grown
Forgetful of you, scent of sex ?

With that warm overcoming breath
You flow about me like the sea,
And down to some delicious death
Your waves are swift to hurry me.

It is the death of her desire ;
The prelude of sleep-heavy sighs,
The pulsing ecstasy of fire,
The wet lips and the closing eyes.

And, Peau d'Espagne, I breathe again,
But, in this ultimate eclipse
Of the world's light, I breathe in vain,
The flower's heart of the unseen lips.

Peau d'Espagne, scent of sex, that brings
To mind those ways wherein I went,
Perhaps I might forget these things
But for that infamy, your scent !

PARIS, *October* 18, 1896.

THE LOVELY WORM OF HELL

THE malady of love is in my bones,
It burns me to the marrow like a fire,
And I desire the death of my desire.

There is a little tongue of fire that moans
Shudderingly in every leaping vein,
And my pain longs for an acuter pain.

Beauty of woman, savour of her kiss,
The mystery of love that turns to be
The bite of an eternal cruelty,

Did God send woman unto man for this,
That he, ere death, should know in her full well
The torment of the lovely worm of hell?

July 6, 1895.

AFTER THE SACRIFICE

So the child turned upon her homeward way
Beneath the dying day,
She and her dead, the death that never dies.
The memory in her eyes
Fought with the drowning and unfathomed dread
Whose waves engulfed her head.
She moved across a dream of some red night
That ached against her sight,
And if the night were past, or yet to come,
She knew not, going home.
She only saw her mother, and her hold
Was harder on the gold.
She clutched it and the memory of it came
About her like a flame.
And so she made her solitary way
Home, 'neath the dying day :
Only the agony of tears unwept
Beneath her eyelids slept.
August 30, 1890.

IN THE STRAND

With eyes and hands and voice convulsively
She craves the bestial wages. In her face
What now is left of woman? whose lost place
Is filled with greed's last eating agony.
She lives to be rejected and abhorred,
Like a dread thing forgotten. One by one
She hails the passers, whispers blindly; none
Heeds now the voice that has not once implored
Those alms in vain. The hour has struck for her
And now damnation is scarce possible
Here on the earth; it waits for her in hell.
God! to be spurned of the last wayfarer
That haunts a dark street after midnight! Now
Shame's last disgrace is hot upon her brow.
May 9, 1889.

ON READING OF WOMEN RIOTING FOR THEIR RIGHTS

WHAT is this unimaginable desire
In women's heads? Would you come down again /
From where you are, to be no more than men?
Why is it that you call it getting higher
To slip with each step deeper into the mire?
You would be even as men are? Is it then
So clean a thing to be a citizen
And take a dirty daily wage for hire?

Man has long since laid up his soul in pawn,
And lent his body out for a machine;
He has long since forgot that he has been
The master, not the servant, of the dawn:
But now the woman fights for leave to ply
A friendly muckrake with him in his sty.

February 15, 1907.

BAL MASQUÉ

Is it an Arabian Night ?
Here's a turban with such pearls
As none but white Circassian girls
Wear in some sullen Sultan's sight.
Yet, below us, brief and bright,
What is this living wheel that twirls
With what flounces and what curls
To weave the painted web of light ?

All the world's a dream or doubt,
Tie our senses to a swing ;
Who is it that pulls the string
Mounts us high or casts us out ?
Lord and lady, lass and lout,
Still the puppets sway and sing :
What is there in anything
To be glad or sad about ?
February 21, 1908.

FAINT LOVE

(For a Fan by Charles Conder.)

BEAUTY I love, yet more than this I love
Beautiful things ; and, more than love, delight ;
Colours that faint ; dim echo far above
The crystal sound, and shadow beyond sight.

For I am tired with youth and happiness
As other men are tired with age and grief ;
This is to me a longer weariness :
Sadly I ask of each sad mask's relief.

For gardens where I know not if I find
Autumn or spring about the shadowy fruit,
And if it is the sighing of the wind
Or if it is the sighing of the lute.

May 23, 1899.

THE TAROT CARDS

THE Tarot cards that rule our fates
Slip through her hands like shaken sands ;
Her charmed sight upon them waits,
She holds the future in her hands ;
Her fingers can unlatch the gates
That open on forbidden lands.

Under the golden kerchief lies
The mischief of the East ; she sees
Beyond our eyesight with her eyes
That are the moons of sorceries ;
The soul before them lives and dies
Through countless immortalities.

The shaken cards upon the grass,
Like signs of good and evil things,
Through her obedient fingers pass,
Crowned devils and bright purple kings,
Sad forms in hell, and Sathanas
Rejoicing in his serpent-stings.

Rise up from the accursed pool,
Lest the grass wither where you lie ;
Fold up the Tarot cards that rule
Our fates, and put your witchcraft by :
Only a madman or a fool
Would will to know his hour to die.

August 3, 1908.

LONDON : MIDNIGHT

I HEAR, in my watch ticking, the vast noise
Of Time's hurrying and indifferent and inarticulate voice ;
I hear, in my heart beating, the loud beat
As of the passing of innumerable feet ;
And afar and away, without, like a faint sea,
The sighing of the city is borne to me
Out of the dumb, listening night ;
And the immeasurable patience and the infinite
Weariness of the world's sorrow rise and cry
Out of the silence up to the silent sky
In that low voice of the city,
So passionately and so intolerably crying for pity,
That I wonder at the voice of Time, indifferent, apart,
And at the lonely and sorrowful and indifferent voice of my
heart.

November 15, 1896.

TO MY MOTHER

WHEN I bethink me how my life goes by,
How gaily idle, what a painted thing,
In revelry, and mirth, and wantoning,
Desiring but the moments as they fly,
And those fleet pleasures that are born to die
Even at the instant of their blossoming ;
How of myself myself would fain be king,
Yet what a sport of Fortune's winds am I ;

Then, Mother, I recall that blessed load,
Half prayers, half hopes, you bore : to have a son
Steadfast in honour, stablished in the faith,
His life a calm preparedness for death.
See, Mother, this is all that I have done
With life you gave me to give back to God.
May 22, 1893.

THE NEW LIFE

O I HAVE loved, and I must love no more.
Poor fool, my heart, thou canst not enter twice,
Not twice nor by another door,
The only Paradise.

—Yet what is this that brims me up again
To the forgotten limits of delight ?
—Thy fancy : it is fond and vain.
Yet this is infinite.

—If this be love, thou hast not loved till now.
—Have I not loved ?—Thou sayest.—Yea, and died.
—Was it not love that died, not thou ?
—Thou knowest if love abide.

—Tell me thyself, then, what hath come to thee.
—I know not ; but I heard a voice that said
“ Arise ! ” and I arose ; and see,
I live, who had been dead !

December 10, 1899.

SUMMER IN SPRING

WHEN summer, come before its hour,
With heady draughts of ripe July,
Drugs the wild April, young in flower,
And suns reel drunken in the sky ;

These lovely useless London days
In which the sunshine, warm in vain,
Is thickened into hateful haze
Or spilt upon the streets, like rain :

To think how, far on fields of green,
The winds are happy in the grass,
And the first bees begin to glean
The honey of the hours that pass !

April 5, 1907.

SONG

WHY did I pick a nut in the wood
That had a bitter core ?
Now I will go into the wood
No more.

Only if they come to you and say,
"Come ! nutting-time is now !"
I will not tell them of the bitter nut
That hangs for me on a bough.

December 19, 1907.

SONG TO THE BRIDE

How fair and how pleasant art thou,
O love, for delights !
As the apple upon the bough
Thy sweetness invites.
A fountain of gardens, a well
Of water alone :
A pomegranate fruit and the smell
Of Lebanon.
Awake, O North wind, and blow
On my garden, O South !
What spices are there that outflow
From the kiss of her mouth ?
O Vineyard, she is thy vine :
What are aloes and myrrh ?
Her love is much better than wine :
What is like unto her ?

July 3, 1906.

REGRET

WHY is it that my heart is asleep, and no dreams wake,
And my thoughts like smoke in the wind are scattered and
shake,
And there is no pain in my heart where it ought to ache ?

I have forgotten what it was to weep or carouse ;
The lamps are lighted, the curtains drawn, in the house ;
I have forgotten the crying of birds, and shaking of boughs.

Be content, my heart ; forget these things ; they are vain.
What dream once dreamed can ever be dreamed again ?
What is better for a heart than to sleep and be out of pain ?
December 17, 1906.

THE WINDMILL

THE day is enough for delight ;
Why, as I lie on the grass,
And watch the clouds as they pass,
Do I reason of wrong and right ?

Only to be, and the breath
I take is all that I need,
Were I but as the flower and weed
That live without thought of death.

But death and right and wrong,
As the windmill turns on the hill
Turn like a burden still
That I cannot cast out of my song.
July 20, 1906.

NERO

Two Dramatic Scenes.

I

NERO

I am tired of talking with so wise a man,
And my kind folly waits. Leave us alone.

SENECA

I would go quicker if I were not old.

[Goes out slowly.]

NERO

Do you hear, Acte ? he is old and wise ;
Foolish old men forget that they were young,
But Seneca remembers. Kiss me, child,
And tell me what you think of.

ACTE

Nothing now.

NERO

A moment since ?

ACTE

Your mother.

NERO

What of her ?

Nero

ACTE

I fear the queen your mother, for her eyes
Are like a cat's eyes, made out of green fire,
And frighten me. When I was in my home
In Smyrna, where tall ships from far-off seas . . .

NERO

Tell me of Smyrna : the East waits for me,
I am to be the King of all the East.
Are there not wildernesses, groves of palms,
Camels, and pools of water ?

ACTE

There is light.

NERO

I hunger for a kingdom in the sun ;
Rome is too narrow ; Rome grows old, I want
A great white ancient city always young.
I must break down the barriers of these hills.

ACTE

No, no. I know you would not leave your hills,
So gentle I could stroke them with my hand,
For all the Asian deserts.

NERO

You have come
Out of a boundless land to be a slave,
Yet you love Rome.

Nero

ACTE

I love to be a slave.

NERO

Why do you fear my mother ?

ACTE

For her eyes.

In Smyrna we fear all that have green eyes.

NERO

You do not fear Octavia ?

ACTE

She is grave

And gentle, though she will not look on me ;

She is, as I am, humble in her heart ;

I would not have you love her : no, and yet

I would die to make her happy.

NERO

You would die

To make Octavia happy ? If you died

You would make Octavia happy.

ACTE

Do you think,

I do not think her, so unkind ; but then

She loves you. It is hard not to be loved.

NERO

You love me, Acte ?

Nero

ACTE

As I love the light.

NERO

Child, child, if I had not been made a King,
Or if I were my master, and a King,
If they would let me, Burrhus, Seneca,
My mother, all my masters, by all the gods,
I think that I could love you well enough,
Acte !

ACTE

I am your slave. I am content.

NERO

When I shall have my kingdom in the East,
You shall sit down beside me on a throne ;
We'll rule the world with songs ; I mean to rule
The world with songs, because I was made King,
And there's no King can make a poet, and I
Was born that poets may be Kings of Kings.

ACTE

When you shall have your kingdom in the East
I shall be still your slave, but you will love
The woman whom I know you are to love.

NERO

What do you say ? What woman ?

ACTE

Otho knows.

Nero

NERO

Otho ? And what should Otho know of love ?

ACTE

He loves.

NERO

Ay, surely, there is not a day
But Otho loves, and not a morrow morning
But Otho's out of love. My small bright bird,
My bird of Asia, come, I'll make for you
A song about my kingdom in the East
And Acte in a city of minarets
Under a palm-tree's shadow by a well.

ACTE

Do not make songs about me : if you speak
It must be truth ; but songs are never true.

NERO

I will put all the East into the song,
And this warm Asian heart, and all this white,
And strange and supple and soft April flesh.

[He walks up and down, not looking at her.]

ACTE

He does not see me. Can it be that men
Forget the thing itself they think upon
With thinking on it ?

Nero

NERO

“Little Asian heart——”

[As he reaches the other end of the stage AGRIPPINA enters, near where ACTE is. She looks at ACTE and points scornfully to the door. ACTE bows submissively and goes out unseen by NERO.]

AGRIPPINA

Nero !

NERO

Ah, mother !

AGRIPPINA

Is it a new song ?

Or are your wits in labour of a speech

Seneca need not write for you ?

NERO

A song.

But was not Acte here ?

AGRIPPINA

Songs and a slave ?

Is this my son, is this the King I made ?

A King of slaves and songs !

NERO

By your good leave,

A King able to stand alone, good mother.

AGRIPPINA

Men mock your name already.

Nero

NERO

Seneca

Or Pallas ? When you gave me for a guide
The wisest man in the world, I learnt to go
To Seneca for wisdom. Did I do wrong ?
He tells me that Apollo is a god,
And slaves are merely human.

AGRIPPINA

He bears with you
That he may rule you.

NERO

Do you bear with me,
Mother, if you would rule me !

AGRIPPINA

Have I not
Borne you and must I bear with you ? O my child,
Ask of me what you will, but cast away
These rags that shame your manhood in men's eyes.
Would you have my knees, must I beseech of you

NERO

Mother, you have given answer in my name
To magistrates and Kings ; ambassadors
Have sued to you for audience ; you have sat
On the level of my throne——

AGRIPPINA

I gave it you.

Nero

NERO

What you have given me, that I hold for mine,
Not to be held lightly, nor given back
Even to the giver. When you gave me power
You gave me power to use it.

AGRIPPINA

Now I know

What manner of man-child is this, and why
His feet were so precipitate to be gone,
Even at the birth, and to have done with me.

NERO

Mother, I am your son, I am the man
You made me.

AGRIPPINA

What I have stooped to for your sake
I will not speak against you.

NERO

Pallas speaks

More than is seemly. Pallas was a slave,
And had accounts to render : let him look to them.

AGRIPPINA

What has not this man done for you, and done
For my sake ! Do you mock me from the throne
With how I thrust you to it ? I have pawned
My beauty, parcelled it, let out my wits

Nero

On leave to fools, down even to that crowned fool
Claudius, that was my husband : I have done all
For an ungrateful and unnatural son
Who gibes me from his footstool.

NERO

Mother, not so.
Hear me——

AGRIPPINA

When, yesterday, you sent me some
Certain rich jewels with a robe of state
Staled among empress' wardrobes, was it then
To rob me of the rest of them : all are mine,
For I have given you all !

NERO

And all are yours :
Ask but the keeper of my treasury,
Claudius of Smyrna.

AGRIPPINA

Pallas ?

NERO

Swears himself
To-morrow out of office.

AGRIPPINA

This is an end
Of peace between us : look on me no more
As on a mother, no, but as a judge

Nero

Between a crowned usurper and the heir
To his dead father's kingdom. Britannicus
Was yesterday a child, to-day a man ;
What he shall be to-morrow I will not say ;
What he should be, who knows not ? I did well,
The just gods helping, to protect that life
Which now may right the empire.

NERO

Will you not
Go to the camp, proclaim the boy, outswear
The gods, and cry " Germanicus " ?

AGRIPPINA

Not in vain
Would I his daughter name Germanicus
To those brave hearts that loved him. Who would heed
Burrhus' unsworded stump, or hear the pale
Seneca's pedant tongue ?

NERO

You speak the truth ;
You warn me, not too late ; nor I too soon,
Perhaps, have taken thought. For this I thank you.
To-night, after the feast, we'll talk again,
And you shall give me counsel. Until then
No word of discord, for we sup together,
And it were best seem friends. If we be so
It were the better.

AGRIPPINA

Do you threaten me ?

Nero

II

NERO

So many years dead, and not quiet yet !
She wakes me, Tigellinus, many nights,
Comes to my bedside, rather like a mother
Than like an angry ghost, and kisses me
Down even to the bottom of a dream.

TIGELLINUS

My lord, that's very well : she loves you still,
Or else the dead forget.

NERO

If she forgot,
That were the best ; but she remembers ; why,
Her kisses are all hoarded from my lips,
And come again to plague me. Do you think
Some of the dead, that were not, as she was,
Immortally full of life, do these forget ?

TIGELLINUS

Surely, my lord.

NERO

Octavia will not come.
She wept in dying, did she not ?

TIGELLINUS

Bitterly.

Nero

NERO

She could not die for cold ; not all her veins
Had enough blood to die with. Now, I am sure
She will not wake again. Where is Poppæa ?

TIGELLINUS

The Empress waits your orders.

NERO

My entreaties,
Perhaps my knees.

TIGELLINUS

She is very proud, my lord.

NERO

You think so, Tigellinus ?

TIGELLINUS

Aye, my lord.

NERO

She has whipped you from her presence ?

TIGELLINUS

No, my lord.

NERO

Whipped you with words, crucified you with her eyes ?

TIGELLINUS

Indeed no less, my lord.

Nero

NERO

That's my brave lass !

It joys me even to think of it. Proud, you say ?

She shall be throned with Isis : I forget,

I spat upon her statue yesterday :

Throned over Isis. Were it not very well

That she should have a temple, like her child,

Having given a goddess birth ?

TIGELLINUS

Give Rome, my lord,

A temple more, it counts a chariot-race,

Or half a play with blood in it.

NERO

Dead, dead !

TIGELLINUS

Who is dead, Cæsar ?

NERO

Why should my child die

And my slave's brat grow up and be a whore ?

The gods forsake me : I am sick at heart ;

All that I love is snatched out of my heart.

1904.

FROM VILLON

No, I am not, as others are,
Child of the angels, with a wreath
Of planets or of any star.
My father's dead, and lies beneath
The churchyard stone : God rest his breath !
I know that my poor old mother
(And she too knows) must come to death,
And that her son must follow her.

I know that rich and poor and all,
Foolish and wise, and priest and lay,
Mean folk and noble, great and small,
High and low, fair and foul, and they
That wear rich clothing on the way,
Being of whatever stock or stem,
And are coiffed newly every day,
Death shall take every one of them.

Paris and Helen are both dead.
Whoever dies, dies with much pain ;
For when his wind and breath are sped
His gall breaks on his heart, and then
He sweats, God knows that sweat of men !
Then shall he pray against his doom
Child, brother, sister, all in vain :
None will be surety in his room.

From Villon

Death makes him tremble and turn pale,
His veins stretch and his nose fall in,
His flesh grow moist and his neck swell,
Joints and nerves lengthen and wax thin ;
Body of woman, that hath been
Soft, tender, precious, smooth and even,
Must thou be spoiled in bone and skin ?
Yes, or else go alive to heaven.

1904.

FROM ANDRÉ CHÉNIER : ÉLÉGIES

I

EVERY man has his sorrows ; yet each still
Hides under a calm forehead his own ill.
Each pities but himself. Each in his grief
Envies his neighbour : he too seeks relief ;
For one man's pain is of no other known :
They hide their sorrows as he hides his own ;
And each, with tears and aching heart, can sigh :
All other men are happy, but not I.
They are unhappy all. They, desolate,
Cry against heaven and bid heaven change their fate.
Their fate is changed ; they soon, with fresh tears know
They have but changed one for another woe.

II

A white nymph wandering in the woods by night
Spies a swift satyr, and pretends a flight ;
She runs, and running feigns to call him back !
The goat-foot, following on her flying track,
Falls down and flounders in a stagnant pool :
Whereat they, while he whimpers, mock the fool.

III

Well, I would have it so. I should have known
How many times I made her will my own.
For once, at least, I should have let her be,
And waited, till I made her come to me.
No. I forget what fretful cries last night
Drove me to bitter silence and to flight ;
This morning, O weak easy heart, I long
To have her back, yet do her pride no wrong.

I fly to her, take all her wrongs, but she
Whom I would pardon will not pardon me.
I it is who am false, unjust, and seek
To show my horrid strength where she is weak.
And floods and tempest come, and tears that flow
Obediently, as she would have them go.
And I, to have some peace, must own defeat,
Kneel down, and take her pardon at her feet.

1903.

FROM PAUL VERLAINE : FÊTES GALANTES

I. CLAIR DE LUNE

YOUR soul is a sealed garden, and there go
With masque and bergamasque fair companies
Playing on lutes and dancing and as though
Sad under their fantastic fripperies.

Though they in minor keys go carolling
Of love the conqueror and of life the boon
They seem to doubt the happiness they sing
And the song melts into the light of the moon,

The sad light of the moon, so lovely fair
That all the birds dream in the leafy shade
And the slim fountains sob into the air
Among the marble statues in the glade.

II. PANTOMIME

PIERROT, no sentimental swain,
Washes a paté down again
With furtive flagons, white and red.

Cassandre, with demure content,
Greets with a tear of sentiment
His nephew disinherited.

That blackguard of a harlequin
Pirouettes, and plots to win
His columbine that flits and flies.

Columbine dreams, and starts to find
A sad heart sighing in the wind,
And in her heart a voice that sighs.

III. SUR L'HERBE

THE Abbé wanders.—Marquis, now
Set straight your periwig, and speak !
—This Cyprus wine is heavenly, how
Much less, Camargo, than your cheek !

—My goddess . . .—Do, mi, sol, la, si.
—Abbé, such treason who'll forgive you ?
—May I die, ladies, if there be
A star in heaven I will not give you !

—I'd be my lady's lapdog ; then . . .
—Shepherdess, kiss your shepherd soon,
Shepherd, come kiss . . . —Well, gentlemen ?
—Do, mi, so. —Hey, good-night, good moon !

IV. L'ALLÉE

As in the age of shepherd king and queen,
Painted and frail amid her nodding bows,
Under the sombre branches and between
The green and mossy garden-ways she goes,
With little mincing airs one keeps to pet
A darling and provoking perroquet.
Her long-trained robe is blue, the fan she holds
With fluent fingers girt with heavy rings,
So vaguely hints of vague erotic things
That her eye smiles, musing among its folds.
—Blonde too, a tiny nose, a rosy mouth,
Artful as that sly patch that makes more sly,
In her divine unconscious pride of youth,
The slightly simpering sparkle of the eye.

V. A LA PROMENADE

THE sky so pale, and the trees, such frail things,
Seem as if smiling on our bright array
That flits so light and gay upon the way
With indolent airs and fluttering as of wings.

The fountain wrinkles under a faint wind,
And all the sifted sunlight falling through
The lime-tree of the shadowy avenue
Comes to us blue and shadowy-pale and thinned.

Faultlessly fickle, and yet fond enough,
With fond hearts not too tender to be free,
We wander whispering deliciously,
And every lover leads a lady-love,

Whose imperceptible and roguish hand
Darts now and then a dainty tap, the lip
Revengees on an extreme finger-tip,
The tip of the left little finger, and,

The deed being so excessive and uncouth,
A duly freezing look deals punishment,
That in the instant of the act is blent
With a shy pity pouting in the mouth.

VI. DANS LA GROTTÉ

STAY, let me die, since I am true,
For my distress will not delay,
And the Hyrcanian tigress ravening for prey
Is as a little lamb to you.

Yes, here within, cruel Clymène,
This steel which in how many wars
How many a Cyrus slew, or Scipio, now prepares
To end my life and end my pain.

But nay, what need of steel have I
To haste my passage to the shades ?
Did not Love pierce my heart, beyond all mortal aids,
With the first arrow of your eye ?

VII. LES INGÉNUUS

HIGH heels and long skirts intercepting them,
So that, according to the wind or way,
An ankle peeped and vanished as in play ;
And well we loved the malice of the game.

Sometimes an insect with its jealous sting
Some fair one's whiter neck disquieted,
From which the gleams of sudden whiteness shed
Met in our eyes a frolic welcoming.

The stealthy autumn evening faded out,
And the fair creatures dreaming by our side
Words of such subtle savour to us sighed
That since that time our souls tremble and doubt.

VIII. CORTÈGE

A SILVER-VESTED monkey trips
And pirouettes before the face
Of one who twists a kerchief's lace
Between her well-gloved finger-tips.

A little negro, a red elf,
Carries her drooping train, and holds
At arm's length all the heavy folds,
Watching each fold displace itself.

The monkey never lets his eyes
Wander from the fair woman's breast,
White wonder that to be possessed
Would call a god out of the skies.

Sometimes the little negro seems
To lift his sumptuous burden up
Higher than need be, in the hope
Of seeing what all night he dreams.

She goes by corridor and stair,
Still to the insolent appeals
Of her familiar animals
Indifferent or unaware.

IX. LES COQUILLAGES

EACH shell incrustéd in the grot
Where we two loved each other well
An aspect of its own has got.

The purple of a purple shell
Is our souls' colour when they make
Our burning heart's blood visible.

This pallid shell affects to take
Thy languors, when thy love-tired eyes
Rebuke me for my mockery's sake.

This counterfeits the harmonies
Of thy pink ear, and this might be
Thy plump short nape with rosy dyes.

But one, among these, troubled me.

X. EN PATINANT

WE were the victims, you and I,
Madame, of mutual self deceits ;
And that which set our brains awry
May well have been the summer heats.

And the spring too, if I recall,
Contributed to spoil our play,
And yet its share, I think, was small
In leading you and me astray.

For air in springtime is so fresh
That rose-buds Love has surely meant
To match the roses of the flesh
Have odours almost innocent ;

And even the lilies that outpour
Their biting odours where the sun
Is new in heaven, do but the more
Enliven and enlighten one,

So stealthily the zephyr blows
A mocking breath that renders back
The heart's rest and the soul's repose
And the flower's aphrodisiac,

And the five senses, peeping out,
Take up their station at the feast,
But, being by themselves, without
Troubling the reason in the least.

En patinant

That was the time of azure skies
(Madame, do you remember it ?),
And sonnets to my lady's eyes,
And cautious kisses not too sweet.

Free from all passion's idle pother,
Full of mere kindliness, how long,
How well we liked not loved each other,
Without one rapture or one wrong !

Ah, happy hours ! But summer came :
Farewell, fresh breezes of the spring !
A wind of pleasure like a flame
Leapt on our senses wondering.

Strange flowers, fair crimson-hearted flowers,
Poured their ripe odours over us,
And evil voices of the hours
Whispered above us in the boughs.

We yielded to it all, ah me !
What vertigo of fools held fast
Our senses in its ecstasy
Until the heat of summer passed ?

There were vain tears and vainer laughter,
The hands indefinitely pressed,
Moist sadnesses, and swoonings after,
And what vague void within the breast ?

En patinant

But autumn came to our relief,
Its light grown cold, its gusts grown rough,
Came to remind us, sharp and brief,
That we had wantoned long enough,

And led us quickly to recover
The elegance demanded of
Every quite irreproachable lover
And every seemly lady-love.

Now it is winter, and, alas,
Our backers tremble for their stake ;
Already other sledges pass
And leave us toiling in their wake.

Put both your hands into your muff,
Sit back, now, steady ! off we go.
Fanchon will tell us soon enough
Whatever news there is to know.

XI. FANTOCHES

SCARAMOUCHE waves a threatening hand
To Pulcinella, and they stand,
Two shadows, black against the moon.

The old doctor of Bologna pries
For simples with impassive eyes,
And mutters o'er a magic rune.

The while his daughter, scarce half-dressed,
Glides slyly 'neath the trees, in quest
Of her bold pirate lover's sail ;

Her pirate from the Spanish main,
Whose passion thrills her in the pain
Of the loud languorous nightingale.

XII. CYTHÈRE

By favourable breezes fanned,
A trellised harbour is at hand
To shield us from the summer airs ;

The scent of roses, fainting sweet,
Afloat upon the summer heat,
Blends with the perfume that she wears.

True to the promise her eyes gave,
She ventures all, and her mouth rains
A dainty fever through my veins ;

And, Love fulfilling all things, save
Hunger, we 'scape, with sweets and ices,
The folly of Love's sacrifices.

XIII. EN BATEAU

THE shepherd's star with trembling glint
Drops in black water ; at the hint
The pilot fumbles for his flint.

Now is the time or never, sirs.
No hand that wanders wisely errs :
I touch a hand, and is it hers ?

The knightly Atys strikes the strings,
And to the faithless Chloris flings
A look that speaks of many things.

The abbé has absolved again
Eglé, the viscount all in vain
Has given his hasty heart the rein.

Meanwhile the moon is up and streams
Upon the skiff that flies and seems
To float upon a tide of dreams.

XIV. LE FAUNE

AN aged faun of old red clay
Laughs from the grassy bowling-green,
Foretelling doubtless some decay
Of mortal moments so serene

That lead us lightly on our way
(Love's piteous pilgrims have we been !)
To this last hour that runs away
Dancing to the tambourine.

XV. MANDOLINE

THE singers of serenades
Whisper their faded vows
Unto fair listening maids
Under the singing boughs.

Tircis, Aminte, are there,
Clitandre has waited long,
And Damis for many a fair
Tyrant makes many a song.

Their short vests, silken and bright,
Their long pale silken trains,
Their elegance of delight,
Twine soft blue silken chains.

And the mandolines and they,
Faintlier breathing, swoon
Into the rose and grey
Ecstasy of the moon.

XVI. A CLYMÈNE

MYSTICAL strains unheard,
A song without a word,
Dearest, because thine eyes,
Pale as the skies,

Because thy voice, remote
As the far clouds that float
Veiling for me the whole
Heaven of the soul,

Because the stately scent
Of thy swan's whiteness, blent
With the white lily's bloom
Of thy perfume,

Ah ! because thy dear love,
The music breathed above
By angels halo-crowned,
Odour and sound,

Hath, in my subtle heart,
With some mysterious art
Transposed thy harmony,
So let it be !

XVII. LETTRE

FAR from your sight removed by thankless cares
(The gods are witness when a lover swears)
I languish and I die, Madame, as still
My use is, which I punctually fulfil,
And go, through heavy-hearted woes conveyed,
Attended ever by your lovely shade,
By day in thought, by night in dreams of hell,
And day and night, Madame, adorable !
So that at length my dwindling body lost
In very soul, I too become a ghost,
I too, and in the lamentable stress
Of vain desires remembering happiness,
Remembered kisses, now, alas, unfelt,
My shadow shall into your shadow melt.

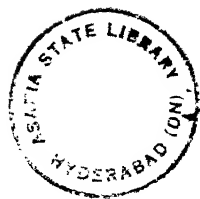
Meanwhile, dearest, your most obedient slave.

How does the sweet society behave,
Thy cat, thy dog, thy parrot ? and is she
Still, as of old, the black-eyed Silvanie
(I had loved black eyes if thine had not been blue)
Who ogled me at moments, palsambleu !
Thy tender friend and thy sweet confidant ?
One dream there is, Madame, long wont to haunt
This too impatient heart : to pour the earth
And all its treasures (of how little worth !)
Before your feet as tokens of a love
Equal to the most famous flames that move

Lettre

The hearts of men to conquer all but death.
Cleopatra was less loved, yes, on my faith,
By Antony or Cæsar than you are,
Madame, by me, who truly would by far
Out-do the deeds of Cæsar for a smile,
O Cleopatra, queen of word and wile,
Or, for a kiss, take flight with Antony.

With this, farewell, dear, and no more from me ;
How can the time it takes to read it, quite
Be worth the trouble that it took to write ?



XVIII. LES INDOLENTS

BAH ! spite of Fate, that says us nay,
Suppose we die together, eh ?
—A rare conclusion you discover !

—What's rare is good. Let us die so,
Like lovers in Boccaccio.
—Ha ! ha ! ha ! you fantastic lover !

—Nay, not fantastic. If you will,
Fond, surely irreproachable.
Suppose, then, that we die together ?

—Good sir, your jests are fitlier told
Than when you speak of love or gold.
Why speak at all, in this glad weather ?

Whereat, behold them once again,
Tircis beside his Dorimène,
Not far from two blithe rustic rovers,

For some caprice of idle breath
Deferring a delicious death.
Ha ! ha ! ha ! what fantastic lovers !

XIX. COLOMBINE

THE foolish Leander,
Cape-covered Cassander,
And which
Is Pierrot ? 'tis he
With the hop of a flea
Leaps the ditch ;

And Harlequin who
Rehearses anew
His sly task,
With his dress that's a wonder,
And eyes shining under
His mask ;

Mi, sol, mi, fa, do !
How gaily they go,
And they sing
And they laugh and they twirl
Round the feet of a girl
Like the Spring,

Whose eyes are as green
As a cat's are, and keen
As its claws,
And her eyes without frown
Bid all new-comers : Down
With your paws !

Colombine

On they go with the force
Of the stars in their course,
And the speed :
O tell me toward what
Disaster unthought,
Without heed

The implacable fair,
A rose in her hair,
Holding up
Her skirts as she runs
Leads this dance of the dunce
And the dupe ?

XX. L'AMOUR PAR TERRE

THE other night a sudden wind laid low
The Love, shooting an arrow at a mark,
In the mysterious corner of the park,
Whose smile disquieted us long ago.

The wind has overthrown him, and above
His scattered dust, how sad it is to spell
The artist's name still faintly visible
Upon the pedestal without its Love,

How sad it is to see the pedestal
Still standing ! as in dream I seem to hear
Prophetic voices whisper in my ear
The lonely and despairing end of all.

How sad it is ! Why, even you have found
A tear for it, although your frivolous eye
Laughs at the gold and purple butterfly
Poised on the piteous litter on the ground.

XXI. EN SOURDINE

CALM where twilight leaves have stilled
With their shadow light and sound,
Let our silent love be filled
With a silence as profound.

Let our ravished senses blend
Heart and spirit, thine and mine,
With vague langours that descend
From the branches of the pine.

Close thine eyes against the day,
Fold thine arms across thy breast,
And for ever turn away
All desire of all but rest.

Let the lulling breaths that pass
In soft wrinkles at thy feet,
Tossing all the tawny grass,
This and only this repeat.

And when solemn evening
Dims the forest's dusky air,
Then the nightingale shall sing
The delight of our despair.

XXII. COLLOQUE SENTIMENTAL

IN the old park, solitary and vast,
Over the frozen ground two forms once passed.

Their lips were languid and their eyes were dead,
And hardly could be heard the words they said.

In the old park, solitary and vast,
Two ghosts once met to summon up the past.

—Do you remember our old ecstasy ?
—Why would you bring it back again to me ?

—Do you still dream as you dreamed long ago ?
Does your heart beat to my heart's beating ?—No.

—Ah, those old days, what joys have those days seen
When your lips met my lips !—It may have been.

—How blue the sky was, and our hope how light !
—Hope has flown helpless back into the night.

They walked through weeds withered and grasses dead
And only the night heard the words they said.

FROM POÈMES SATURNIENS

I. SOLEILS COUCHANTS

PALE dawn delicately
Over earth has spun
The sad melancholy
Of the setting sun.
Sad melancholy
Brings oblivion
In sad songs to me
With the setting sun,
And the strangest dreams,
Dreams like suns that set
On the banks of the streams,
Ghost and glory met,
To my sense it seems,
Pass, and without let,
Like great suns that set
On the banks of streams.

II. CHANSON D'AUTOMNE

WHEN a sighing begins
In the violins
Of the autumn-song,
My heart is drowned
In the slow sound
Languorous and long.

Pale as with pain,
Breath fails me when
The hour tolls deep.
My thoughts recover
The days that are over,
And I weep.

And I go
Where the winds know,
Broken and brief,
To and fro,
As the winds blow
A dead leaf.

III. FEMME ET CHATTE

THEY were at play, she and her cat,
And it was marvellous to mark
The white paws and the white hand pat
Each other in the deepening dark.

The stealthy little lady hid
Under her mittens' silken sheath
Her deadly agate nails that thrid
The silk-like dagger-points of death.

The cat purred primly and drew in
Her claws that were of steel filed thin :
The devil was in it all the same.

And in the boudoir, while a shout
Of laughter in the air rang out,
Four sparks of phosphor shone like flame.

FROM LA BONNE CHANSON

I.

THE white moon sits
And seems to brood
Where a swift voice flits
From each branch in the wood
That the tree-tops cover. . . .

O lover, my lover !

The pool in the meadows
Like a looking-glass
Casts back the shadows
That over it pass
Of the willow-bower. . . .

Let us dream : 'tis the hour. . . .

A tender and vast
Lull of content
Like a cloud is cast
From the firmament
Where one planet is bright. . . .

'Tis the hour of delight.

II

THE fireside, the lamp's little narrow light ;
The dream with head on hand, and the delight
Of eyes that lose themselves in loving looks ;
The hour of steaming tea and of shut books ;
The solace to know evening almost gone ;
The dainty weariness of waiting on
The nuptial shadow and night's softest bliss ;
Ah, it is this that without respite, this
That without stay, my tender fancy seeks,
Mad with the months and furious with the weeks.

FROM ROMANCES SANS PAROLES

I

'Tis the ecstasy of repose,
'Tis love when tired lids close,
'Tis the wood's long shuddering
In the embrace of the wind,
'Tis, where grey boughs are thinned,
Little voices that sing.

O fresh and frail is the sound
That twitters above, around,
Like the sweet tiny sigh
That lies in the shaken grass ;
Or the sound when waters pass
And the pebbles shrink and cry.

What soul is this that complains
Over the sleeping plains,
And what is it that it saith ?
Is it mine, is it thine,
This lowly hymn I divine
In the warm night, low as a breath ?

II

I DIVINE, through the veil of a murmuring,
The subtle contour of voices gone,
And I see, in the glimmering lights that sing,
The promise, pale love, of a future dawn.

And my soul and my heart in trouble
What are they but an eye that sees,
As through a mist an eye sees double,
Airs forgotten of songs like these ?

O to die of no other dying,
Love, than this that computes the showers
Of old hours and of new hours flying :
O to die of the swing of the hours !

III

TEARS in my heart that weeps,
Like the rain upon the town.
What drowsy languor steeps
In tears my heart that weeps ?

O sweet sound of the rain
On earth and on the roofs !
For a heart's weary pain
O the song of the rain !

Vain tears, vain tears, my heart !
What, none hath done thee wrong ?
Tears without reason start
From my disheartened heart.

This is the weariest woe,
O heart, of love and hate
Too weary, not to know
Why thou hast all this woe.

IV

A FRAIL hand in the rose-grey evening
Kisses the shining keys that hardly stir,
While, with the light, small flutter of a wing,
And old song, like an old tired wanderer,
Goes very softly, as if trembling,
About the room long redolent of Her.

What lullaby is this that comes again
To dandle my poor being with its breath ?
What wouldst thou have of me, gay, laughing strain ?
What hadst thou, desultory faint refrain
That now into the garden to thy death
Floatest through the half-opened window-pane ?

V

O SAD, sad was my soul, alas !
For a woman, a woman's sake it was.

I have had no comfort since that day,
Although my heart went its way,

Although my heart and my soul went
From the woman into banishment.

I have had no comfort since that day,
Although my heart went its way.

And my heart, being sore in me,
Said to my soul : How can this be,

How can this be or have been thus,
This proud, sad banishment of us ?

My soul said to my heart : Do I
Know what snare we are tangled by,

Seeing that, banished, we know not whether
We are divided or together ?

VI

WEARILY the plain's
Endless length expands ;
The snow shines like grains
Of the shifting sands.

Light of day is none,
Brazen is the sky ;
Overhead the moon
Seems to live and die.

Where the woods are seen,
Grey the oak-trees lift
Through the vaporous screen
Like the clouds that drift.

Light of the day is none,
Brazen is the sky ;
Overhead the moon
Seems to live and die.

Broken-winded crow,
And you, lean wolves, when
The sharp north-winds blow,
What do you do then ?

Wearily the plain's
Endless length expands ;
The snow shines like grains
Of the shifting sands.

VII

THERE's a flight of green and red
In the hurry of hills and rails,
Through the shadowy twilight shed
By the lamps as daylight pales.

Dim gold light flushes to blood
In humble hollows far down ;
Birds sing low from a wood
Of barren trees without crown.

Scarcely more to be felt
Than that autumn is gone ;
Languors, lulled on me, melt
In the still air's monotone.

VIII. SPLEEN

THE roses were all red,
The ivy was all black :
Dear, if you turn your head,
All my despairs come back.

The sky was too blue, too kind,
The sea too green, and the air
Too calm : and I know in my mind
I shall wake and not find you there.

I am tired of the box-tree's shine
And the holly's, that never will pass,
And the plain's unending line,
And of all but you, alas !

IX. STREETS

DANCE the jig !

I loved best her pretty eyes
Clearer than stars in any skies,
I loved her eyes for their dear lies.

Dance the jig !

And ah ! the ways, the ways she had
Of driving a poor lover mad :
It made a man's heart sad and glad.

Dance the jig !

But now I find the old kisses shed
From her flower-mouth a rarer red
Now that her heart to mine is dead.

Dance the jig !

And I recall, now I recall
Old days and hours, and ever shall,
And that is best, and best of all.

Dance the jig !

FROM JADIS ET NAGUÈRE

I. ART POÉTIQUE

MUSIC first and foremost of all !
Choose your measure of odd not even,
Let it melt in the air of heaven,
Pose not, poise not, but rise and fall.

Choose your words, but think not whether
Each to other of old belong :
What so dear as the dim grey song
Where clear and vague are joined together ?

'Tis veils of beauty for beautiful eyes,
'Tis the trembling light of the naked noon,
'Tis a medley of blue and gold, the moon
And stars in the cool of autumn skies.

Let every shape of its shade be born ;
Colour, away ! come to me, shade !
Only of shade can the marriage be made
Of dream with dream and of flute with horn.

Shun the Point, lest death with it come,
Unholy laughter and cruel wit
(For the eyes of the angels weep at it)
And all the garbage of scullery-scum.

Take Eloquence, and wring the neck of him !
You had better, by force, from time to time,
Put a little sense in the head of Rhyme :
If you watch him not, you will be at the beck of him.

Art poétique

O, who shall tell us the wrongs of Rhyme ?
What witless savage or what deaf boy
Has made for us this twopenny toy
Whose bells ring hollow and out of time ?

Music always and music still !
Let your verse be the wandering thing
That flutters in flight from a soul on the wing
Towards other skies at a new whim's will.

Let your verse be the luck of the lure
Afloat on the winds that at morning hint
Of the odours of thyme and the savour of mint——
And all the rest is literature.

II. MEZZETIN CHANTAN

Go, and with never a care
But the care to keep happiness !
Crumple a silken dress
And snatch a song in the air.

Hear the moral of all the wise
In a world where happy folly
Is wiser than melancholy :
Forget the hour as it flies !

The one thing needful on earth, it
Is not to be whimpering.
Is life after all a thing
Real enough to be worth it ?

FROM SAGESSE

I

THE little hands that once were mine,
The hands I loved, the lovely hands,
After the roadways and the strands,
And realms and kingdoms once divine,

And mortal loss of all that seems
Lost with the old sad pagan things,
Royal as in the days of kings
The dear hands open to me dreams.

Hands of dream, hands of holy flame
Upon my soul in blessing laid,
What is it that these hands have said
That my soul hears and swoons to them?

Is it a phantom, this pure sight
Of mother's love made tenderer,
Of spirit with spirit linked to share
The mutual kinship of delight?

Good sorrow, dear remorse, and ye,
Blest dreams, O hands ordained of heaven
To tell me if I am forgiven,
Make but the sign that pardons me!

II

O my God, Thou hast wounded me with love,
Behold the wound, that is still vibrating,
O my God, Thou hast wounded me with love.

O my God, Thy fear hath fallen upon me,
Behold the burn is there, and it throbs aloud,
O my God, Thy fear hath fallen upon me.

O my God, I have known that all is vile
And that Thy glory hath stationed itself in me,
O my God, I have known that all is vile.

Drown my soul in floods, floods of Thy wine,
Mingle my life with the body of Thy bread,
Drown my soul in floods, floods of Thy wine.

Take my blood, that I have not poured out,
Take my flesh, unworthy of suffering,
Take my blood, that I have not poured out.

Take my brow, that has only learned to blush,
To be the footstool of Thine adorable feet,
Take my brow, that has only learned to blush.

Take my hands, because they have laboured not
For coals of fire and for rare frankincense,
Take my hands, because they have laboured not.

From Sagesse

Take my heart, that has beaten for vain things,
To throb under the thorns of Calvary,
Take my heart, that has beaten for vain things.

Take my feet, frivolous travellers,
That they may run to the crying of Thy grace,
Take my feet, frivolous travellers.

Take my voice, a harsh and a lying noise,
For the reproaches of Thy Penitence,
Take my voice, a harsh and a lying noise.

Take mine eyes, luminaries of deceit,
That they may be extinguished in the tears of prayer,
Take mine eyes, luminaries of deceit.

Alas, Thou, God of pardon and promises,
What is the pit of mine ingratitude,
Alas, Thou, God of pardon and promises.

God of terror and God of holiness,
Alas, my sinfulness is a black abyss,
God of terror and God of holiness.

Thou, God of peace, of joy and delight,
All my tears, all my ignorances,
Thou, God of peace, of joy and delight.

Thou, O God, knowest all this, all this,
How poor I am, poorer than any man,
Thou, O God, knowest all this, all this.

And what I have, my God, I give to Thee.

III

SLUMBER dark and deep
Falls across my life ;
I will put to sleep
Hope, desire, and strife.

All things pass away,
Good and evil seem
To my soul to-day
Nothing but a dream ;

I a cradle laid
In a hollow cave,
By a great hand swayed :
Silence, like the grave.

IV

The body's sadness and the languor thereof
Melt and bow me with pity till I could weep,
Ah ! when the dark hours break it down in sleep
And the bedclothes score the skin and the hot hands move ;
Alert for a little with the fever of day,
Damp still with the heavy sweat of the night that has thinned
Like a bird that trembles on a roof in the wind :
And the feet that are sorrowful because of the way,
And the breast that a hand has scarred with a double blow,
And the mouth that as an open wound is red,
And the flesh that shivers and is a painted show,
And the eyes, poor eyes so lovely with tears unshed
For the sorrow of seeing this also over and done :
Sad body, how weak and how punished under the sun !

V

Fairer is the sea
 Than the minster high,
 Faithful nurse is she,
 And last lullaby,
 And the Virgin prays
 Over the sea's ways.

Gifts of grief and guerdons
 From her bounty come,
 And I hear her pardons
 Chide her angers home ;
 Nothing in her is
 Unforgivingness.

She is piteous,
 She the perilous !
 Friendly things to us
 The wave sings to us :
 You whose hope is past,
 Here is peace at last.

And beneath the skies,
 Brighter hued than they,
 She has azure dyes,
 Rose and green and grey.
 Better is the sea
 Than all fair things or we.

FROM PARALLÈLEMENT: IMPRESSION
FAUSSE

LITTLE lady mouse,
Black upon the grey of light ;
Little lady mouse,
Grey upon the night.

Now they ring the bell,
All good prisoners slumber deep ;
Now they ring the bell,
Nothing now but sleep.

Only pleasant dreams,
Love's enough for thinking of ;
Only pleasant dreams,
Long live love !

Moonlight over all,
Someone snoring heavily ;
Moonlight over all
In reality.

Now there comes a cloud,
It is dark as midnight here ;
Now there comes a cloud,
Dawn begins to peer.

Little lady mouse,
Rosy in a ray of blue,
Little lady mouse :
Up now, all of you !

FROM CHANSONS POUR ELLE

You believe that there may be
Luck in strangers in the tea :
I believe only in your eyes.

You believe in fairy-tales,
Days one wins and days one fails :
I believe only in your lies.

You believe in heavenly powers,
In some saint to whom one prays
Or in some Ave that one says.

I believe only in the hours,
Coloured with the rosy lights
You rain for me on sleepless nights.

And so firmly I receive
These for truth, that I believe
That only for your sake I live.

FROM EPIGRAMMES

WHEN we go together, if I may see her again,
Into the dark wood and the rain ;

When we are drunken with air and the sun's delight
At the brink of the river of light ;

When we are homeless at last, for a moment's space
Without city or abiding-place ;

And if the slow good-will of the world still seem
To cradle us in a dream ;

Then, let us sleep the last sleep with no leave-taking,
And God will see to the waking.

1895-1905.

FROM CATULLUS : CHIEFLY CONCERNING LESBIA

I

I LIKEN him unto a god,
Or if so be it a higher thing,
Who sits and gazes on thy face,
Looking and listening

To thy sweet laughter. Whereas I,
With senses ravished if I come
So near as to behold thy face,
Swoon, and my tongue is numb,

And a thin fire through all my limbs
Races, and both my ears are stopped
With a great sound that rings, and dark
Is upon daylight dropped,

But thou, Catullus, know that ease
Wrongs thee : put off thy idleness.
Older and happier states and kings
Have perished for no less.

II

SPARROW, darling of my dear,
She will play with you, and hide you
In her bosom, and confide you
Her fore-finger without fear.
Nay, will tease you till you bite,
When it pleases her, my bright
Shining lady of delight,
With some dear thing to be playing,
That (if I her sense discover)
Love's full ardours being over,
She may find some after-staying
Of the heart-ache : would that I
Might play with you like her, and part
With all the sorrows of my heart.

III

GRACES, let your tears be shed,
Love's, and mortals lovelier,
For my lady's sparrow dead,
The dead darling of my dear,
Dearer than her eyes to her ;
He was sweet as the honey-cell,
And his mistress he knew well
As a girl her very mother.
In her breast he would nest,
Hopping there and hopping here,
He would pipe unto no other,
Who now goes the darksome way :
Whence none come again, they say.
But on you, ye shades of night,
All fair things in darkness steeping,
Curses ! you have snatched away
A lovely sparrow, my delight,
Hapless sparrow ! from my keeping.
Through you my lady's eyes of light
Are heavy now and red with weeping.

V

LET us live, my Lesbia, and let us love :
Old men's sayings are for old men wise enough :
Give them a farthing for the price of the stuff.
Suns may set and suns upon earth arise :
As for us, when for us the brief light dies,
There is only night, and an everlasting sleeping.
Give me a thousand kisses, then ; be heaping
A hundred upon a thousand, then a second hundred
Upon another thousand, and another hundred ;
Then, when the number has up to a myriad mounted,
Let us lose the reckoning, lest our love should be counted,
And we or another envying us should guess
How many kisses make up our happiness.

XCII

LESBIA speaks nothing but evil about me, they say.
 Well, what of that? May I perish if love does not move her.
 What is the proof? That I backbite Lesbia all day
 Myself: may I perish, gods! if I do not love her.

VII

WHAT, Lesbia, can you ask if any
 Kisses of yours could be too many?
 How many are the sands that lie
 All perfume to the Libyan sky,
 From where old Battus' ashes dwell
 To Jove's parched desert oracle?
 How many a star unsleeping hovers,
 On still nights, over stealthy lovers?
 Shall kisses such as all or any
 For your mad lover be too many?
 O let no count of envy reach them,
 Nor no wicked tongue bewitch them.

VII

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XIII

You shall sup with me, Fabullus, if all is well, you
 Shall sup with me like a prince ; but let me tell you
 That you'll have to bring the wherewithal of the feast
 And the wine and the salt and a girl or two at least,
 And laughter for every man in the lees of the cup.
 These, if you bring, as I say, dear fellow, we'll sup
 Like princes ; but Catullus' lean purse is lined
 With nothing, alas, but spider's webs, you'll find.
 Yet take in return love's very honey of love,
 Or, if love itself be not dainty and sweet enough,
 I will give you some perfume here in the house already,
 For the Loves and the Graces gave it to my lady ;
 When that you have only breathed I can hear you cry :
 " Make me all nose, O gods, or let me die ! "

XLIII

HAIL, although of nose not neat,
 Black of eyes nor trim of feet,
 Long of fingers, dry of mouth,
 Nor too dainty-tongued, forsooth,
 Mistress of no better man
 Than a bankrupt Formian.
 Does your province not declare you
 Beautiful ? and even compare you
 With my Lesbia ? O disgraced
 Age, incapable of taste !

XLIII

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Black of eyes nor trim of feet,
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LXXXVI

QUINTIA is beautiful, many will tell you : to me
 She is white, she is straight, she is tall : to all this I agree,
 But does this make her beautiful ? though she be found
 without fault,

Can you find in the whole of her body the least pinch of
 salt ?

But Lesbia is beautiful ; hers is the secret alone
 To steal from all beauty its beauty, and make it her own.

LXXXIII

WHEN her husband is with us Lesbia speaks harshly to me,
 Whereat the fool of a man is filled to the brim with glee.
 Ass, don't you see ? were she silent, and could she forget
 all about me

Then were she heart-whole to you ; but, now to nag and
 flout me

Isn't to merely remember ; but what is the worst of the lot,
 She is angry, and that is a sign she is burning and boiling hot.

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She is angry, and that is a sign she is burning and boiling hot.

XLVIII

YOUR honeyed eyes, Juventius,
If you would let one kiss,
Three hundred thousand would to us
Seem nothing much amiss :
Could all earth's ears of corn eclipse
That heavenly harvest of the lips ?

CIV

WHAT, I speak evil ? I never can speak well enough of her
My life, who is dearer to me than the sight of my eyes.

I could not ; nor would, if I could not but be so in love
with her :

But Tappo and you make such monsters of minikin lies.

XCVI

IF living sorrows any boon
Unto the silent grave can give
When sad remembrances revive
Old loves and friendships fugitive,
She sorrows less she died so soon
Than joys your love is still alive.

CI

WANDERING many waters and many lands,
 I come, my brother, to do sad rites as of old ;
 See, I bring you the death-gift in my hands,
 Hear, I speak to you, speak to the ashes cold.
 All that fortune has left me in place of you,
 Alas, poor brother, bereft of innocent breath !
 Yet, as our sires before us have done, I do,
 I bring the same sad gifts, an offering for death.
 Take them, that they of a brother's tears may tell ;
 And now for all time, brother, hail and farewell.

LXX

A WOMAN says that no wooer but I could move her ;
Not Jove, if he came a-wooing, would be to her mind
She says it : but let what a woman says to her lover
Be written in running water and told to the wind.

LXXXV

I HATE and I love : you ask me how one can do it ?
I know not : I know that it hurts : I am going through it.

XXVII

No weak wine shall wet the lip :
Fill a stronger bowl for her,
Drunken as a drunken pip,
Who's our Lady lawgiver.
Water, plague of wine, avaunt
To some stoic-bellied haunt ;
Bacchus' brew is all we want.

CVII

If a wished for thing and a thing past hoping for
Should come to a man, will he welcome it not the more?
Therefore to me more welcome it is than gold
That Lesbia brings me back my desire of old,
My desire past hoping for, her own self, back.
O mark the day with white in the almanac!
What happier man is alive, or what can bring
To a man, whoever he be, a more wished-for thing?

CIX

THIS pleasant love, my life, between us two,
You promise me shall be perpetual.
Great gods, take thought to keep her promise true,
First on the lips, but inly most of all ;
And grant how long soever our lives run
This holy bond of friendship shall go on.

LXXXII

FRIEND, would you have Catullus's eyes in debt,
Or whatever is dearer to him than his eyes ?
Seek not to take from him that which is dearer yet
Than his eyes, or whatever is dearer to him than his eyes.

LXXIII

CEASE to do good to any man, or be
The thought to find him grateful, far from thee.
All men are thankless : none a favour takes
But of the gift a grief and burden makes.
I find no claws so sharp to turn and rend
As his who was my one and only friend.

LXXII

LESBIA, you swore to me once you were known, save Catullus,
of no man,
Not for a God out of heaven would the bond of your love
be forgot :
Then was my love for you not as a man's mere love for a
woman
But as a father's love for children himself has begot.
Now, I know you ; and now, though I burn for you still
past all reason,
Somewhat lighter a thing and cheaper a thing you seem.
How can that be ? do you ask. Because to a lover such
treason
Wakes in the heart desire, kills in the soul esteem.

LX

Who gave you birth ? a Libyan lioness
Or Scylla barking from her nether womb ?
That thus you mock a suppliant in distress
Who cries to you from off the edge of doom ?
O entire monster of hard-heartedness !

LXXVI

IF there is any pleasure to any man in the thought
 He has been pious to men, truly a friend to a friend,
 Broken no sacred pledges, nor in no compact sought
 To take the name of the gods in vain for a treacherous end,
 Joys enough for a lifetime you shall earn, if any can,
 Catullus, out of the love given you back by none ;
 For whatever a man can do or say for a man,
 Surely that you have said, surely that you have done.
 This was all of it lent to a thankless heart, and is lost :
 Why are you sorry at all or troubled in mind for this ?
 Set your soul firm ; withdraw yourself from out of his
 coast ;
 Why seek grief for yourself, as if of the gods it is ;
 Hard it is to put by of a sudden a love grown strong,
 Hard it is, but a gain indeed that has to be got :
 This is the one safe way, although the way may be long,
 This you have got to do, whether you can or not.
 Gods, if pity is yours, or if ever ye gave
 Grace to a wretch that lay in the very moment of death,
 Look on me in my anguish, and give release, if I have
 Purely lived in my life, from this plague of pestilent breath.
 Ah ! this torpor that creeps like a poison from vein to vein
 Every joy that was once a joy from my heart has chased :
 Now I ask no longer that she should love me again,
 Or, what never could be, that she would choose to be chaste.
 Let me be well again, and from this foul malady free :
 Render to me, O gods, the reward of piety.

LXXXVII

No woman could say that a man had loved her better
 Than I, my Lesbia, have loved you, my loveliest.
 There was never a bond more strictly kept to the letter
 Than the bond I made that you should be loved the best.
 Now is my mind so distracted by what they tell of you,
 So lost in allegiance to your unworthiness,
 If you came to be honest again I could never think well of
 you,
 But do what you would, I never could love you less.

LVIII

CAELIUS, Lesbia mine, that Lesbia, that
 Lesbia whom Catullus for love did rate
 Higher than all himself and than all things, stands
 Now at the cross-roads and the alleys, to wait
 From the lords of Rome, with public lips and hands.

LVIII

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Lesbia whom Catullus for love did rate
Higher than all himself and than all things, stands
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From the lords of Rome, with public lips and hands.

VIII

MISERABLE Catullus, put an end to this folly :
 Let all things dead be over and ended wholly.
 Once the sun was bright and the light was fair,
 And there was a woman to love, and she waited there,
 And never a woman was better loved than she.
 Surely the sun was bright and fair to see,
 And merrily then the hours of love went by
 When nothing that you desired would she deny.
 Now the woman, desiring no more, denies :
 You too, deny, nor follow her as she flies.
 Be miserable no more, for all is vain :
 Set your soul steadfast and harden your heart again.
 Farewell : Catullus has hardened his heart again,
 He will not follow nor cry to you now in vain.
 No, it is you that shall weep, as you lie alone,
 And no man cries at your gate, and the night goes on.
 What shall remain to you then ? who shall come to your call ?
 Who shall call you fair ? nay, whom shall you love at all ?
 Who shall have you for this ? whose lips shall you bite
 and kiss ?
 But you, Catullus, harden your heart at this.

LXIII. ATTIS

OVER ocean Attis sailing in a swift ship charioted
 When he reached the Phrygian forests, and with rash foot
 violently
 Trod the dark and shadowy regions of the goddess, wood-
 garlanded,
 And with ravening madness ravished, and his reason
 abandoning him,
 Seized a pointed flint and sundered from his flesh his virility.
 Then in all his limbs realising his manhood irrevocable,
 Seeing earth with blood besprinkled, with fresh blood, the
 blood of him,
 In his snow-white hands he snatches, the light tambourine
 suddenly,
 Tambourine that thou, Cybele, madest, mother, for thy
 mysteries,
 And, between his tender fingers the hide's hollow agitating,
 Stricken through with trembling shudders, thus sings to his
 companions :
 " Corybantes, all together, up, on to the woods of Cybele ;
 All together, on, ye wandering herds of Dindymus' shep-
 herdess,
 Ye that seeking foreign shores, and, in an exile voluntary,
 Following me and guided by me, on my ways my companions,
 Having overcome the rapid main and the floods' savagery,
 And in passing hate of Venus having overcome the man in
 you,
 Now your mistress' heart gladden ye with the speed of
 courses precipitate.

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courses precipitate.

Attis

Slow delay be cast behind you, follow all together, follow me,
To the Phrygian home of Cybele, Phrygian woods, the
goddess's,
Where the cymbals utter their voices to the tambourines
echoing,
Where the curved reed makes grave music for the Phrygian
flute-player,
Where the Maenads toss together wild heads ivy-filleted,
Where with piercing ululations the sacred signs are agitated,
Where in wonted wake the wandering cohort follows the
deity,
Thither meet it is we hasten, thither with dances swift-
footed."
Scarcely had the would-be woman Attis ceased to his fol-
lowers
When at once the Corybantes shrieked, and their tongues
palpitated,
And their tambourines re-bellowed, and their cymbals
crackled hollowly,
And the chorus swiftly leaping rushed towards Ida's summits
verdurous.
Whereat Attis, raging, wavering, goes unsteadily, breath
forsaking him,
Tambourining through the dark woods the tumultuous
company,
As, the yoke's weight shouldered off it, surges the heifer
untamable.
Him their leader all the Bacchantes follow with feet pre-
cipitate;
But no sooner Cybele's threshold touched, together lan-
guorously

Attis

Fall in sleep, tired out with journeying, and without Ceres'
sustenance.
Sluggish slumber shuts their eyelids in a languor hesitating,
From their souls the raging madness passes away in quietude.
But, when the golden-visaged sun with bright eyes illu-
minated
Cloudless ether and the solid earth and ocean tumultuous,
And with sounding hoofs of morning trampled night's
shadows away,
Then did Sleep with flying footsteps remove from Attis
awakening
And divine Pasithea took him back to her bosom tremulous.
Then awakening out of quiet suddenly without delirium
All at once his deed returning comes again to his memory,
And himself he sees, and where, and without what now
abidingly,
And with mind at ebb and flow he turns him seaward and,
surveying it,
All the mighty vast of ocean, through eyes weeping inces-
santly,
He his fatherland addresses with sad cryings dejectedly:
"Fatherland, O my mother! fatherland the begetter of me,
Have I, wretch above all wretched, cast thee off as a runagate
Slave his master, and on Ida sought these groves, this icy
dwelling-place
Of the snow and savage region of the wild beasts'
sovereignty?
Where, O where and in what region shall my thoughts
imagine thee, fatherland?
Still the light within my eyelids longs for thee, turning
thitherward,

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Where, O where and in what region shall my thoughts imagine thee, fatherland ?

Still the light within my eyelids longs for thee, turning thitherward,

When my mind a little season scatters these pangs ravaging me.
 Am I then condemned for ever to these distant woods,
 abandoning
 Fatherland and friends and chattels and the forefathers of me,
 These abandoning, forum, race-course, wrestling-place, and
 gymnasium?

Miserable, ah miserable soul lamenting herself perpetually!
 For what form of bodily feature is there that I had it not?
 I a woman! I adolescent, I a stripling, I all but a man,
 I the seemliest at the wrestling, at the gymnasium I the
 flower of them?

Once my doors were thronged, my thresholds warm with
 footprints uncountable,

Once my dwelling was with flowery wreaths and tokens
 engarlanded,

When I used to leave my chamber, and the rising sun arose
 with me.

I a priestess of the gods now, and a waiting-woman of Cybele?

I a Maenad, I this remnant left of a man emasculate?

I inhabit the cold green places, Ida's summit snow-gar-
 mented?

I beneath the heights of Phrygian mountains scatter my life
 away,

Where the woodland-haunting hind is and the wild-boar
 wood-wandering?

Now, now the deed I sorrow for; now, now I repent of it."
 Scarcely from the rosy lips the sound had gone and, flitting
 rapidly

To both the ears of the gods the new rumour communicated,
 When the lions from the traces of her chariot-yoke un-
 harnessing

Cybele thus spake, and stung with words the left flock-
 terrifier:

"Go," she cries, "and with the fury of thy going, my
 fierce minister,

Let a madness harry, a madness drive him to my wood-fastnesses
 Who desires to be delivered from my intolerable slavery.

Go thou, beat thy flanks with thy tail, and endure thy own
 blows lashing thee,

Roar, roar till all the region round resounds with thy
 bellowing,

Toss thy brawny neck and toss abroad thy fierce mane
 rutilant."

Thus spake the pitiless goddess, with her hands the yoke
 untrammelling.

Whereat, loosed, the beast to swiftmess in his fury lashing
 himself,

Rushes, roars, and breaks the thickets all in pieces with his
 galloping.

Then he, coming to the sea-wet margin where the foam
 whitens it,

Seeing there the tender Attis, where the flood curdles
 luminous,

Rushes on him: he in terror flies, the savage woods envelop
 him;

Who his whole life long inhabits them, the goddess's waiting
 woman.

Goddess, mighty goddess, Cybele, lady goddess of Dindymus,
 Keep, mistress, all thy fury far, far from my dwelling-place,
 Others urge thou headlong, others with thy madness
 intoxicate.

Attis

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LESBIA AND OTHER POEMS

I. LESBIA

(TO LESBIA)

THE VAMPIRE

INTOLERABLE woman, where's the name
For your insane complexity of shame ?
Vampire ! white bloodless creature of the night,
Whose lust of blood has blanched her chill veins white,
Veins fed with moonlight over dead men's tombs ;
Whose eyes remember many martyrdoms,
So that their depths, whose depth cannot be found,
Are shadowed pools in which a soul lies drowned ;
Who would fain have pity, but she may not rest
Till she have sucked a man's heart from his breast,
And drained his life-blood from him, vein by vein,
And seen his eyes grow brighter for the pain,
And his lips sigh her name with his last breath,
As the man swoons ecstatically on death.

January 7, 1896.

THE RINGS

I KNOW you by the voices of your rings :
Unhappy and inevitable things
Cry to me in their shining silence ; each
Has its own fatal and particular speech.
There is a ring with rubies that I hate :
You wear it often, and it lies in wait
Like an assassin, shooting fire at me
When your pale finger seeks it lingeringly.
Two rings I watch for, hoping, half in dread,
To see the one ; but if I see instead,
Worn on the third left finger, and alone,
A certain old poor ring with a blue stone.
I pity first myself, as lovers do,
Then I forget all else, and pity you.

MADRID, *March* 30, 1899.

HER NAME

O STILL the same
Subtle and melancholy flame,
That winds about the soul, and spires
About the body of desires,
And is both life and death at heart !
Love comes and goes, the years depart,
But we abide ; we on our ways
Conduct the visionary days
That seems to lead us ; and we seem
As dreamers moving through a dream,
Who know the path we are to tread.
I loved you once, and we have said,
Each to the other, words that bind
Soul unto soul, mind unto mind,
Because they are not said in speech.
Afterward there remained to each
That other word, said best in tears ;
Then shadowy and silent years ;
And how I hear your name again,
And all the years have been in vain.
Have we not waited for this hour
As slaves await their day of power ?
We have both triumphed ; I behold
Your brightening path that shines with gold
From where I meditate in peace.
What is it then, in this release,
That sets us free to set us thus
Where all we have is nought to us,

Her Name

Seen now with one another's eyes ?
We have been wise, and yet too wise,
Too wise, and yet not wise enough,
And this is the revenge of love ;
Conquered and led in chains, he feels
His Kingship, at our chariot-wheels ;
He knows us, conquerors though we be,
Still slaves, and in his slavery.

April 30, 1898.

VAIN PRAYER

I HAVE prayed once, as tired men pray for sleep.
That I might close the wakeful lids that keep
The watch of Memory, watching on a grave.
I have prayed once for this, only to have
Not joy, nor love, only oblivion ;
For love, that was the joy of life, is gone,
And, going, has left a shadow in its place,
Which is the shadow of joy's averted face.
I have prayed once, and yet, for all my pain,
I have rejoiced that I have prayed in vain.
It is incredible that such desires
Should die so meanly. God has not lit His fires
To be puffed out by any dusty breath,
That never lived which can accept of death.
July 7, 1898.

VUE DU LAC

ONCE, in this tempest of my life,
I have been folded from the strife
Of winds that war upon my ways,
In the warm quiet of these bays.
Once I have heard, with you far hence,
'The abiding sea's indifference
Murmur continually on,
Being content to be alone.
And I have once endured the peace
Of an endurable release,
Where tranquil hours have wrought for me
A respite from your memory.
Once and once only ; you demand
My heart, too joyful at your hand
(Since from calm ways you call it home)
To suffer the old martyrdom.

FERMAIN BAY, GUERNSEY, *May* 12, 1896.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

WHY is it, since I made you thus,
I have no peace in that I made ?
Since our desire has come to us
Why is it I am half afraid
To look on this that I have made ?

I laughed to flight Love's innocence,
I bade a wiser love be ours,
Subtler in secret, to the sense,
I spoiled of all but poisonous flowers
The perfumed garden that was ours.

And now the poison-heavy breeze
Searches the corners of my brain,
And airs of unavailing peace
Mock me in memory, and in vain
Innocent odours haunt my brain.

I would that you and I could be
Once more what you and I have been ;
Give back your innocence to me,
And banish all that went between,
All you have been, all I have been !

FERMAIN BAY, *May* 13, 1896.

VANITAS

I MET you at the parting of the ways,
And I have lingered with you certain days.

Over a little grave I had set a stone :
I had buried love, and I was all alone.

The roadway of the unforgotten past
Ended ; the road in front lay vague and vast.

I met you at the parting of the ways,
And I have lingered with you certain days.

Because you took my hand in both your hands,
I think there may be help in other lands.

Because you laid your face against my face,
I wonder if hope lives in any place.

Because you laid my head upon your breast,
I know the earth holds yet a little rest.

PARIS, *April* 11, 1896.

ARIA

THERE's a tune turns, turns in my head,
And I hear it beat to the sound of my feet
For that was the tune we used to walk to
In the days that are over and dead.

Another tune turns under and over,
And it turns in my brain as I think again
Of the days that are dead, and the ways she walks now,
To the selfsame tune, with her lover.

DIEPPE, *August* 18, 1896.

COLLOQUIES : I. PRIDE

O you may still be proud, my Soul replied
To the disconsolate questioning
Of eyes dejected from some hoped-for thing :
You cannot live, poor fool, without your pride.
A woman passed you in the street to-day.
She was the fairest woman in the street,
I watched your eyes and her eyes meet,
And in her eyes she carried you away.

ROME, *February* 15, 1897.

II. THE WAITING PLACE

I SAID to my friend's friend : Why do his eyes
Seem to be waiting for a thing we see not ?
Why do they look before as if they waited ?
And he replied to me : His soul is waiting :
It waits for Life that has gone by for ever,
It waits for Life to turn upon her pathway.

I said to my friend's friend : Why do his eyes
Seem to be listening to a thing we hear not ?
Why do they look aside as if they listened ?
And he replied to me : His soul is listening :
It listens to the steps of Death behind him,
The feet of Death that turn not from his pathway.

ROME, *February* 21, 1897.

IN SUFFERING

LIGHTLY I wrote of leaden-footed hours,
But never knew how heavier far than lead
Is the unhurrying and unceasing tread
When sleepless suffering longs for dawn, yet cowers
Into a terrified and huddled thing,
As, listening to the passing of those feet,
It waits and hates the dawn that can but greet
With its own face the face of suffering.

But now, alas ! but now at last I know
How long a day is and how long a night
When measured out in minutes, one by one ;
And half forget how short a while ago
I dared await, without a wild affright,
Reluctant dark and the delaying sun.

1897.

DREAMS

Tired out with grieving over love,
Love once so kind, so cruel grown,
I wake into an alien day
Of mere oblivion.
The white dawn gathers, aching white :
Surely I had ill dreams last night ?

For, lying drowsily awake,
Desiring only to forget,
Remembered joys return in grief,
Kisses remembered yet,
Her lips on mine, her lips now mine
No more, or now no more divine.

Breathed on and dimmed, that face still haunts
The mirror of my memory ;
Her face—but ah, it is these tears
That hide her face from me.
Oh Memory, from my heart remove
Even the memory of love !

June 13, 1896.

ROME

I SET all Rome between us : with what joy I set
The wonder of the world against my world's delight.
Rome, that hast conquered worlds, with intellectual might
Capture my heart, and teach my memory to forget !

ROME, *January 7, 1897.*

DREAMS IN ROME

To dream of love, and, waking to remember you :
As though, being dead, one dreamed of heaven, and woke
in hell.

At night my lovely dreams forget the old farewell :
Ah ! wake not, by his side, lest you remember too !

ROME, *January 2*, 1897.

MAGIC

IF I go to the ends of the Earth, shall I find her there,
The woman I loved and who loved me and left me alone ?
If I go to the hell of men's hatred, shall I find her hair
Scented as Satan's, who jibes at God on His throne ?

If I find my way across the passionate Sea,
And sail in a sailing ship that the sea-wave clips,
Shall I hear her laugh as the winds laugh, laughing at me ?
Never on Earth nor in Hell shall her lips touch my lips.

1918.

BY THE FOUNTAIN

I REMEMBER SO well when we crept down the stair
From the room we had loved in, made bright
With the light in the room and the night in her hair
Into the heart of the night.

The light of the night was not utterly gone
Nor the light that shone on the stair :
With no moon in the sky, by the Fountain alone
With the heart of the night in her hair.

1918.

ON LIFE AND LOVE

Now until all the world is over
There's but one Love and there's but one Lover,
Or two at most, that I can discover.
For as no love can be counted nor told
In letters of gold—gold can miscarry——
There's no use at all for such lovers to marry,
So is it now, so was it of old.
Now the face of a woman to a man is fairer——
Fairer than hell or than heaven above——
To a soul that's all afire with love,
And cares not to think if Satan snare her.
If heaven's above and hell is under
The earth we tread on, while the light lingers,
We too shall never be rent asunder.
See, I hold her hand in my fingers——
You, that have seen her not, know not her wonder.
1918.

THE STORM

You will not come out of the Storm ?
The door is opened wide.
The wind howls wildly, inside all is warm.
I cannot step outside.

I know you would not come to me if I died,
You whose body is warm.
For you no more shall the door be opened wide,
For you the wind and storm.

1918.

THE HEART

WHY are you next to my heart ?
You were once you, I was I.
Then did you make me start,
Then, when you used to lie ?

Gone you are and your truth,
And a mere thing makes me start.
Why did you give me your youth
When you were next to my heart ?
April 17, 1918.

SONNET

SINCE all's not over, and the stars depart,
And you are here who go from me to-night,
Shall either of us ask the other's heart
Why love was ours, and why I used to write
Songs of our passion that you always kept
Out of your mother's sight, not out of yours,
That when you woke at nights or when you slept
Were part of you, and seeing what one endures
Has been so and so must be till we pass
What's called the Exit upon every Stage,
As you when your dance was over: will the glass
Of Memory, that has shown in every Age
Faces of lovers loving, leave no trace
Of ours, that on the Stage met face to face?

October 13, 1915.

LAMIA

SHE is the very Lamia of my soul.
Does she not bite subtly ? Yea, she leaves one whole
Red spot, here in my side, where most I feel
The snake untrodden by the woman's heel.
And she as Lamia veritably trod,
With snake's feet and snake's wings, the ground where God
Planted the Tree of Evil and of Good.
Is she not in the blood that feeds my blood ?
Where did she bite most cruelly ? Near the heart.
O Lamia, Lamia, will you never depart ?

February 13, 1918.

THE GIFT

You, most unlikely of all things,
To have met after all my wanderings,
What gift was given me, what gift of grace,
To have seen again your passionate face,
Nor nights nor days have bereft me of,
To have seen those eyes where some tragical love
Flown from Eternity found its nest ?
Gone all the ardours that heaved your breast
When you lay in my arms and I kissed you close
And your mouth on my mouth was the mystical rose ?
Lesbia you were, Lesbia you are not. Come,
Ashes of love, and find for yourselves a home.

1917.

II. INTERMEZZO

(TO THE MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE)

NINI PATTE-EN-L'AIR

(*Casino de Paris*)

THE gold Casino's Spring parterre
Flowers with the Spring, this golden week ;
Glady, Toloche, Valtesse, are there ;
But all eyes turn as one to seek
The drawers of Nini Patte-en-l'air.

Surprising, sunset-coloured lace,
In billowy clouds of gold and red,
They whirl and flash before one's face ;
The little heel above her head
Points an ironical grimace.

And mark the experimental eyes,
The naughty eloquence of feet,
The appeal of subtly quivering thighs,
The insinuations indiscreet
Of pirouetting draperies.

What exquisite indecency,
Select, supreme, severe, an art !
The art of knowing how to be
Part lewd, aesthetical in part,
And *fin-de-siècle* essentially.

Nini Patte-en-l' Air

The Maenad of the Decadence,
Collectedly extravagant,
Her learned fury wakes the sense
That, fainting, needs for excitant
This science of concupiscence.

PARIS, *May* 14, 1892.

PROLOGUE : BEFORE THE THEATRE

THE play, who should praise ? Praise rather the actors who
play !

Would you not say, as you watch, that we lived our parts,
You who sit and watch our playing to-day,
We of each other, and almost our hearts to our hearts,
And almost, I fancy, the Author himself as well ?
He gave us our words in his story, but could he have
dreamed

We should take for our own the story he set us to tell,
And be, for our moment, the thing that we need but have
seemed ?

I swear to you, first-born and last of my heart's one love,
That I love you not ; you who love me believe me ; and
you

Sob in my ears that you cannot hate me enough,
And I go on my way, and I say to my heart : " It is true ! "
And to you, O friend, who are tender and loving and wise,
And a friend out of all to be loved, but by other men,
I swear that I love you, calling my soul to my eyes,
And alas ! my friend, you always believe me then.
How well we play our parts ! Do you ever guess,
You as you sit on the footlights' fortunate side,
That we, we haply falter with weariness,
And haply the cheeks are pale that the blush-paints hide,
And haply we crave to be gone from out of your sight,
And to say to the Author : " O our master and friend,
Dear Author, let us off for a night, one night !
Then we will come back, and play our parts to the end ! "

January 17, 1897.

AT A MUSIC-HALL

THE loud, oppressive orchestra,
Panting its sultry music out,
Is as the voice of heat without,
And, throbbing hotly, pulses " Ah,
The wind upon the woods without ! "

The glittering ballet curves and winds
Bewildering broideries of heat ;
I feel the weariness of feet,
And how the footlights' mirror blinds
The aching eyeballs soaked with heat.

Here in the stalls I sit and sigh
For the renewal of the sea ;
I hear the cool waves calling me,
Where wave to cool wave makes reply
On the Mediterranean sea.

August 18, 1893.

LOVE AND ART

THE sun went indistinguishably down
Over the murky town,
Night droops about the houses heavily ;
The Temple gateways gape and frown,
But, as I enter, strangely, comes to me
The odour of patchouli,

Ah, there she flits before me, whose gay scent
Betrays the way she went ;
A corner intercepts her, she is gone ;
And as I follow, indolent,
My visiting mind, with her to muse upon,
Runs curiously on.

I seem to hear her mount the narrow stair,
Creaking, for all her care ;
And now a door flies open, just above,
And now she laughs, to see him there,
His arms about her, and both babble of
The nonsense-verse of love.

I enter and forget them, for to-night
I have my verse to write ;
That love-song, I have yet to pare and trim.
So should it be ? or—God ! the light
In that revealing casement-square grows dim :
He kisses her, and I but write of him !

October 15, 1893.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

I STROLLED in the midnight homeward along the Strand,
And I heard the bells ring out for the new-born year,
And the tavern's light and the church's on either hand,
Shone, and the sound of a voice was in my ear.

Feeble, vibrating, faint as the voice of night,
Out of the darkness came the caressing voice ;
And the church's light on the left, and the light on the right,
Shone, and the voice on the right said : " Make your
choice ! "

And I saw in a dream the hours of the years to be,
Tossed like foam from the billowy bells on high ;
And I heard their voices, like the sound of the sea,
Call to me out of the future : I heard them cry :

" We, the hours of the year that to-night hath born,
Hold in our hands the gifts of the year to-night :
Choose, for the choice is yours ere the night be morn ;
Choose, for the choice is yours ere the dark be light."

Then I saw that the church loomed up like a wall of cloud
And the tavern window glowed like a ball of fire,
And I heard the caressing voice that spake aloud
The will of my flesh and the whisper of my desire.

January 2, 1892.

STELLA MALIGNA

I. STELLAE FIGURA

HER beauty has the serpent's undulant grace,
The rhythm and flow of softly fluctuant line ;
And in the stealthy contours of her face,
And in her eyes, the charm is serpentine.

Her eyes have gleams that shine implacably,
A glitter cold and sharp as swords ; they smile
Subtly as Vivien by the cloven tree
On Merlin growing careless of her guile.

Her face in smiling wakes strange memories,
Memories of death and old forgotten woe ;
Her eyes are pools where many a drowned hope lies,
They shine above the dead who sleep below.

The very charm of death is in her look,
The fascination of all delicate deaths
Of mortals who in easeful ways forsook
The taking of so many weary breaths.

Her beauty is the mask of spectral nights ;
She smiles, and tells no secret. Lips so red
Are roses for a garden of delights,
Surely, and never any garden-bed,

Flushed with a ruddier fragrance :—what of dreams !
Only shake loose the perfume of thy hair,
And let me bathe in those delirious streams,
Stella, and I intoxicate despair !

May 26, 1889.

II. LAUS STELLAE

THY beauty is a garden planted
With tropic flowers of poisonous breath,
Where, in the odorous air enchanted,
Naught blossoms but the seeds of Death.

There pale insatiate shadows creep,
Sated, yet still unsatiated ;
Nor dost thou fear, so calm they sleep,
The resurrection of the dead.

Spells of Thessalian sorceresses,
Philtres in magic moonlights brewed,
Herbs plucked in ancient wildernesses
Of noontide deepened solitude,—

Pale witchcraft of the earlier world,
Thy subtle poison mocks, whose cup,
Sparkling and delicately impearled,
Once drained, shall drain all reason up.

They who drink deep of that sweet poison
Put by the wholesome fruits of earth ;
They pine where ineffectual foison
Makes sorer their inveterate dearth.

Thy tresses are an odorous bower
Deep-scented as, in seas afar,
The blue and burning noontide hour
Wakes on the shores of Malabar.

Laus Stellae

Is not thy voice the voice of Lethe ?
Is not thy kiss remembered well
Where over thee and underneath thee
The vague mists wrap the ways to hell ?

The charm and terror of thine eyes
Whisper : there may be, even so,
Airs of remembered Paradise
On brows of angels now in woe.

May 27, 1889.



III. STELLAE ANIMA CLAMAT

She sat before her mirror, and she gazed
Deep into eyes that gazed at her again.
Oh, what sad ghosts her mournful memory raised——
Ghosts of the days that pass and are in vain.

She saw her youth, her youth that passed ; she saw
The lovers for whose hearts she played and won.
She saw her beauty hold the world in awe,
Triumphing over all beneath the sun.

She saw her slain revive, the tombless dead,
Dead souls that dwell in mortal bodies yet.
She heard the maledictions that they said
Before a bar of judgment ever set.

These were her lovers ; she to them had been
The *Rosa mystica*—rose passion-pale !
The poison 'neath the petals slept unseen ;
For she was beautiful, and man is frail.

These all rose up against her in her past ;
All these she took no thought of ; but her pride
The mirror vanquished : “ Youth is fleeting fast,
And I have never tasted love ! ” she cried.

“ O God, that I might yet before all goes
Once more be loved, and once, the last and first,
Love ! I have been, yet never plucked, the rose ;
And I have quenched, yet never felt, that thirst

Stella Anima Clamat

“ Whereby we put on immortality.
Is it too late I find it ? must the sod
Press down this body that is all of me,
And shall not Love survive it, who is God ? ”

Thus, counselled of her mirror, will she lay
Sure snares, as Lilith wove her golden hair ;
And someone coming softly by the way
Shall suddenly be taken unaware.

Alas for him ! for it were better much
That he had never yet begun to be.
If, when she loved for play, her love was such,
What, when she loves for love's sake, shall it be ?

January 16, 1889.

CORRUPTIO OPTIMI PESSIMA

(On a drawing)

THE smoky locks that twist about that brow
In anguish of rebellion, are the same
That bore the laurel, when the mouth's acclaim
(Wide with unspeakable woes and cursings now)
Woes heard among the sons of God, whose vow
Is ever toward the Highest. What strong shame
Has burnt upon this visage like a flame
Afire upon a temple,—strong to bow
The columns of its strength, and blacken all
The sacred writing on the pictured wall,
And lay the altar low and ruinous?
Where, when the fire has had its will, there lies
Of all once holiest underneath the skies,
A heap, a ruin, black and hideous.

1889.

THE DANCE OF THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

A large and empty room with a door on the right and an open fireplace on the left. On each side of the fireplace sit an old MAN AND WOMAN representing the Body and the Soul : THE MAN holds an hour-glass in his hand, THE WOMAN a staff with which she stirs the fire of logs.

THE SOUL

O brother Body, we are old.
What is this numb and trembling cold
That sets us shaking like thin boughs ?
Is it not winter in the House ?
Sit closer to the fire and stir
The logs till they are cheerfuller,
And put a warmth into our knees ;
And think no more of memories,
When we were younger, and could feel
The blood in use from head to heel.

THE BODY

O Soul, my sister, is it you
That now I must give answer to ?
You who of old when I was sick
Would heal me by some heavenly trick,
And set before me when I would
The meat of dreams to be my food ?
Have you forgotten with our youth
That what we will for truth is truth,
And that the flames have always been

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The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins

A mirror where our eyes have seen
The dancers of those ecstasies
That were to our first opening eyes
Immortal spirits, exultant flames,
Names with the seven unspoken names ?

THE SOUL

I can call up those dancers.

THE BODY

Call

The dancers up, and let them all
Dance the old way, and let them each
Speak the old way, or some new speech.
Call up the dancers.

THE SOUL

All is vain.

We live, and living is the pain
We die of while we live. This earth
Was made in some celestial mirth
Not for our pleasure. I who seem
But to remember in a dream
Some sleep bewildered thoroughfare,
Dream not, remember, and despair.

THE BODY

Dream always, and remember not.
I, if I dreamed, have yet forgot
Even the sleep. One hour I hold
An hour-glass sifting sands of gold.
Call in the dancers, for they give

The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins

Bonds to the moment fugitive,
Wings to the moment slow to pass ;
Shake out the sands in the hour-glass,
Sister, O Soul, call back to-night
My dancers, spirits of delight !

*The door opens and the STAGE-MANAGER, in a mediæval dress,
comes in and goes up to the front of the stage and says :*

Here, to the Soul's and Body's eyes,
Out of the flames seven spirits rise ;
Now the first spirit, Lust, begins
The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins.

*While he is speaking the door again opens and a DRAPED FIGURE
Enters. The STAGE-MANAGER retires to the right-hand
side of the stage and stands watching every movement. The
DRAPED FIGURE, after a few steps in a slow dance movement,
stands behind THE BODY and THE SOUL, unseen by them
looking into the fire as if into a mirror, and speaks. He is
LUST. Each Sin dances in turn.*

THE SOUL

O Body, is it true that I
Gave to the Worm the wings to fly ?

SLOTH Enters and Speaks

THE SOUL

Body, this spirit whose slow feet
Scarce stir the tiniest flame to beat,
Has surely drunk out of your veins
This slave's quiescence in its chains ;
I have no part nor lot therein.

The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins

THE BODY

Thereby is Sloth the less a sin.

AVARICE Enters and Speaks

THE BODY

This burdened spirit is of both,
This busy Kinswoman of Sloth,
This curb upon our speed, this guest
Beneath the table at the feast,
Who, sated, like a dog would hoard
The bones he snatches from the board.

GLUTTONY Enters and Speaks

THE BODY

This sacred spirit of excess
Speaks wisdom in its wantonness.
Sister, my Soul, know all fruits
That grow with earth about their roots,
And there is nothing more divine
Than I have tasted in earth's wine ;
Yet, filled and drunken, I have sighed,
Unsated and unsatisfied,
For those far fruits of Paradise,
The heavenly orchard of your eyes.

ANGER Enters and Speaks

THE SOUL

O Body, my kind enemy,
This is the voice that speaks in me
When, for the love of that delight

The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins

Which is your presence day and night,
I pour my anger for your good
Over you, like a searching flood.
O Body, it is late ; the sands
Sink through the hour-glass in your hands,
And where the fiery dancers are
The word's last ashes slowly char,
And I am cold again. The voice
Of Anger is a foolish noise,
A foolish and unfriendly thing,
Body, not worth remembering.

PRIDE Enters and Speaks

THE SOUL

We, too, O Body, have been proud ;

THE BODY

Yea, as a dead man of his shroud.

THE SOUL

I, even as Pride, have lifted up
The one intoxicating cup
Of all the knowledge of the world.

THE BODY

And I, as Pride, have snatched and hurled
The cup of Knowledge in the dust,
With hands of force and feet of lust.

ENVY Enters and Speaks

The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins

ENVY

My name is Envy among men.
I am the eyes of love, and when
The lover looks upon the eyes
That casket all his Paradise,
I am the longing greed of him,
And my desire makes bright and dim
Reflection of all lovely things
With covetous imaginings,
And of unlovely things I make
Things lovely for my longing's sake.
I am desire of good, desire
Of beauty, I alone inspire
Perfecting thirsts that emulate
Each last draught of the ultimate.
I know no measure, nothing is
Unsought by my swift avarice,
That would unyoke the shining seven
Pleiades from the shafts of heaven,
Unanchor the moon's crescent boat,
Ravish the song from the bird's throat,
And from all mortal sweets distil
The elixir of the impossible.
Man knows me not ; he calls my name
Envy, not knowing what I am.
I speak all tongues ; also I speak
The learning all the ages seek,
Some capture, and all leave behind ;
I take the earth into my mind,
Unto my heart I gather love.
I lust not, nor sloth—heavy move,

The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins

No miser nor no wine-bibber,
Nor is my tongue hasty to stir,
Nor my eyes proud ; but I am wise
As the snake's tongue, the woman's eye.

THE BODY

Dancers, I tire of you. I tire
Of all desire save one desire.

THE SOUL

Dancers, I tire of you. I tire
Of all desire save one desire :
That I were free of you. Mine eyes
Are heavy with your mockeries.
Dancers, I am more tired than you.
When shall the dance be danced all through ?
The fire is nearly dead ; and one
By one the last sands fall ; the sun
Will meet the darkness on its way.
O Body, is it nearly day ?

THE BODY

Would it were that last day of days !

*The STAGE-MANAGER comes forward to the front of the stage
and says :*

Does not each morning that decays
To midnight end the world as well,
In the world's day, as that farewell
When, at the ultimate judgment-stroke,
Heaven too shall vanish in pale smoke ?

1899.

214

HELEN AND FAUSTUS

I

THE famous Faustus is not dead.
I tell you that his spirit lied.
His body burst his coffin-lead
The third day after he had died.
So in the Legend it is said,
Also that Knowledge was his Bride.
Some say he perished in his pride,
But I say no. The books he read
Were part and parcel of his soul
But he was made to be unwise.
What weight has wisdom when the skies
Hid from this learned man the hole
Into the which he had to stumble?
The Devils in Hell are never humble.

II

The Devil tempted him. He came
Winged, wordless, into Faustus' room,
And in his eyes the infernal flame
Shone, and he lighted up the gloom.
Now Faustus heard another name
That was not his. Senses consume
Themselves as, with her intense perfume,
The word was Helen. Hot with shame
The Wizard's visage was drawn in
As if he saw a certain thing

Helen. and Faustus

And not of his imagining
That danced in the air, that tainted Sin
After the old inevitable fashion
When Lilith gave the snake her passion.

III

Here where I write the Sea-gulls shout
That have the spirits of the storm
In their winged bodies, ringed about
With beauty more than woman's ; warm
In winter when the wolves are out.
God gave them an inhuman face
No Satan ever can deform.
To Faustus the eternal Doubt
Came and the colours of the World
Were changed and purple turned to blood
In the magic circle where he stood,
And then a venomous Serpent curled
Into no hideous shape but loathing
All other than his painted clothing.

IV

Now Helen's spirit was a bird
And she an untired Wanderer
To whom all loveless words unheard
Were subtle to the sense of her ;
She, kissed by Paris, for a word
That stung like salt. None lovelier
Drew in her breath, none lovelier
Drew in her breath, when she was stirred

Helen and Faustus

By all that world of Sea and Stone
On her lone island, where the Sea
Shook her imagination furiously.
She loved no beauty save her own,
And, as she walked in that white city,
Men said of her : " She has no pity."

V

Love was not ever for her enough.
She felt no throbbing in her heart
At the mere utterance of Love.
She nothing had but Beauty. Art
To her was less than woven stuff
Her Asian maids wove ; she, apart,
Waited for visions to depart
No Asian moons had knowledge of.
She knew the turning of the Wheel
Of Destiny might bruise her heel
As slaves do when they slay a snake.
Knew she that flames may be fain to steal
Their own flames and make Troy to reel
And simply for her, Helen's, sake ?

VI

I have forgotten Faustus. He
Has dropt in fear his magic book
Because the buzzing of a bee
Attracts him with its strange rebuke.
Then suddenly in irony
His conjuring-wand from out its nook

Helen and Faustus

Falls. Satan's eyes have changed their look.
Now, as a wind-blown tapestry
Shakes and the painting on it change
Their aspects, and the very dust
Stirs on the floor, it seems most strange
That he, now in the spirit's toil,
Should have the sense in him to spoil
The Architecture of his Lust.

VII

Suddenly the Arch-Demon spoke.
"Faustus, I come to you from Hell.
Some souls are burdened by the yoke
Of chastisement irrevocable.
There Arctino cries 'Souls to sell!'
Writhes in imagination to invoke
Some scandalous and obscene joke.
He sees gigantic serpents swell
Bigger than ever; and he, lithe
Still, loves to see them as they writhe.
Soon all his merriment is over.
A woman comes and laughs at him,
Showing seductiveness of limb
She showed on earth to her last lover.

VIII

"I come to bargain for your soul,
Your Soul, whole-fashioned for your Sin
Which has not fathomed yet the whole
Of Evil that is compassed in

Helen and Faustus

A virgin-martyr's aureole.
There are many doors that open in
One Hell to which souls may not win
Unless they enter, shoal by shoal,
Past even your imaginings
Of the immensity of your Fall.
You might as well ask a naked wall
As ask of me this only thing :
' When shall I fall in the Pits of Evil ? '
Where there's no God, there's no Devil ! ''

IX

Then something sinister takes place
All of a sudden. The hour-glass
Stops dropping silent grains ; a race
Of shadows, mocking shadows pass ;
The ceiling like a drunk ship sways ;
No minute passes as it was ;
The floor heaves up, the floor turns grass ;
And on the spirit of Faustus weighs
As the eternity of a verse
The condemnation that shall capture
The intimate limits of his flesh
Irrevocably now in Satan's mesh,
And unimaginably worse
Than the sinful body's ultimate rapture.

X

Down the blown valleys of the Sea
He shudders and the race begins
Of waters heaving heavily

Helen and Faustus

Over his head, and something spins
A devil's web that arrogantly
Sets water-rats to shake their shins,
And all the flesh that is his skin's
Is changed immensely. Is this he
That in his utter anguish craves
More than the immunity of slaves
That desire nothing but damnation?
All's lost. See how a madman raves
Hurled this and that way by the waves
Down the long way to Annihilation!

XI

He rises shaken out of sleep,
And sees no spirit there but one
Whose eyes are fathomless and deep
As the sea's depths when day has won
Its way from night. Steep after steep
Rises, he sees her eyes: nay, none,
None lovelier ever saw the sun
Out of the fiery ocean leap.
Her eyes have known Eternity,
Her mouth that smiles not is most cruel.
And all her body is a wonder.
Hades she haunts, has heard Hell thunder.
What is more cruel than a jewel
That flames, laughs, lightens furiously?

XII

As from the bowl one spills the wine
And then one overturns the bowl,

Helen and Faustus

Helen's long laughing eyes divine
Shine as the symbol of her soul.
Now Faustus wavers, mad, malign,
She turns upon him with the whole
Of her white purity, love's goal.
"Faustus, you never shall be mine.
It is so long since I have been dead
I know not why I breathe the air,
For in the grave there is no sighing.
To have slept for centuries in one bed,
God knows I had reason to be fair :
God knows if there's an end of dying."

XIII

The famous Faustus is not dead.
Now, as for Helen, has she gone
Back to the eternity of her bed
That she alone has slept upon ?
The world goes on ; over her head
Men pass and women : she, ever alone,
Lies, lonelier than any stone.
I would that all the words she said
Were written ; these, alas, are lost.
Her, not the uncounted years destroy
If she were angry as a ghost,
What would the wind say and the frost,
For she the gate of Death has crossed,
Of all that remains of Helen and Troy ?

April 11-15, 1919.

HELEN

THAT heavenly Helen, whose hot lips
The felon's heart of Paris clove,
A city's hell, a hell of ships,
Hell of men's hearts, in her alcove
Sees shapes of saffron, shapes of mauve,
Move, wave, until the inevitable
Stings of desire as serpents' stings
Give her the after-taste of hell.
See how the soul within her springs
From the woven robe that to her clings,
About a body made too fair
For any woman to endure :
That beauty and that heavy hair,
Those eyes that many passions lure,
That flesh so pure to the impure,
The impure that mock her in the streets
And follow her to the market-place.
O Helen of the sensual heats
The blood gives when the sun's disgrace
Sheds all his heat, now over Thrace,
Now over Argos, will you not,
Now that the dark falls and the gloom
Of night begins, begin to plot
With me in your close-scented room
More than the odour of your perfume
Can give to any man but one,
One, your last lover ? See the fire

Helen

Of sunset's over and the sun
Descends : the moon has her desire.
This hour our Destiny has spun
A web that might unweave the sun.

March 23-24, 1919.

A SONG FOR HELEN

O how her lids did burn
Against the sun's heat,
Now in a little urn,
Hushed her heart's beat,
Helen's most piteous dust
Must come to nought !
Nothing but love and lust
Left, and our thought.

March 31, 1919.

SONG

A SONG for Helen who shall sing
That adores Helen as his breath
And holds the world a trivial thing
Beside the majesty of Death ?

Her beauty wrought the world no wrong,
Men's souls she fastened in her snare :
Who now shall sing an idle song
Into the void imperishable air ?

June 7, 1918.

III. BIRDS IN THE NIGHT

(TO IRIS)

MUSIC

Music for joy :
Joy waits on sadness to be sweet ;
Music is sad,
And waits on gladness to complete
The unimaginable joy where joy and sorrow meet.

Music for love,
When love lies dreaming of delight ;
Music when love
Shines upward on an angel's flight ;
And for all happy lovers music, music day and night.

Bid music cease,
When love is sad, when love would weep ;
Music is sad,
For her exultant voices keep
Endless desire, infinite sorrow, but not hope nor sleep.
1899.

THE GYPSY'S SONG

THE Gypsy said : I'm here to thrive,
The earth he is my bed,
But as for coming here to wive,
The Devil strike me dead !

I've had enough of Concubines,
To last for ever so long ;
There's always taverns for drinking wines—
Let's end the night with a song.

We loves to jiv along the roads,
We and our Caravans,
And when we comes on hopping toads
Chais lift their hands like fans.

We always loves to light a fire
Near by the gorse and sedge ;
It smokes and then it rises higher :
Liz leans against the hedge.

We always loves of the air its scent
And all the winds that pass,
And then we fix with thorns our Tent—
Smoke scars the greenest grass.

Now if I wishes for anything
In hell or up above
The blood's on fire for wandering
And the heart in me burns for love.

1917.

A DRINKING SONG

I GIVE you my lips to drink,
I give you in truth
Less than you choose to think
In your wild youth
Of how wine is lifted up,
One's song is sung,
And that your mouth's the cup
And that you're young.

March 31, 1919.

SONG FOR ISEULT

THE Heart cries for light
And the soul for Desire
In the midst of the Night
In the heart of the Fire.
They cry for all things
That are and that were.
Desire alone brings
All the night in her hair
To me as I sit
And gaze on the fire.
Finite and infinite
Are the Gods of the Fire !

April 13, 1918.

THE CURLEW

THRICE have I heard the Curlew cry.
Thrice, as the ominous bird of night
And as the sea-foam was scattered high
And the naked dancers in the sky
Had given over dancing, and an evil eye
Shone like hell's fire, and the angel of light
Had folded his wings, not as the wings
Of the wind-blown sea-gulls that laugh as they fly
And hide in their hidden hearts such things
As they alone know of, I was aware
Of a sudden heat and a change in the air
And the opening somewhere of a door
That opened on nothing, but out of it shone—
Transverse on the sea-waves' shifting floor—
A light more strange than when the night is gone
And the new dawn burns. Lo and it turns,
Turns on itself, and the sea's floor burns,
And the very space before me is thinned,
And the thing that looms there, is it not I?
Thrice have I heard the Curlew cry
And thrice I have cried with the voice of the wind.
April 21, 1919.

OLD BONES

HE'LL never make old bones,
At least I think not ;
He'll sit on the ancient stones,
At least he shall drink not
Of wounds that are worse than moans ;
But if he shall sink not
Under a woman's burden he'll live on
Under a toad-like stone,
And, as far as he can prove it,
Shall try to love it,
Being more utterly inhuman
Than any woman
God ever made out of clay.
The stone's image shall vanish away
And the woman at his side
Shall be one of the images
Made by the evil ones
Out of the ruins of moons and suns,
Not out of the whirling tide
Of the imaginary seas ;
She shall be no man's bride,
None shall bend at her knees.
And, before the world turns over
And tries to sleep,
This love-drunken man shall be her lover,
Blood between them shall leap—
Blood shall cry out for blood,
And down from the mountains steep

Old Bones

There shall be blood on the flood,
Men's blood under the stones ;
And, as long as the world shall sleep,
He'll never make old bones.

April 28, 1918.

THE AGATE

I cut an agate for a stone
And this I put into a cleft
And I was with the wind alone
And nothing else of me was left,
But what in cutting it I had lost.
Now had one lost the wind and rain
One had no reason, even a ghost
Has much more reasoning than men.
And still I wander on alone
And there's a something in my mind,
Of having cut an agate-stone
That jogs at me from far behind
And makes me more uneasy than one
Who having not counted up the time
Knows that the deed he has not done
Counts for an agate in his crime.

April 27, 1918.

IN THE WOOD

I HAVE made a beautiful fire :

I am in haste to be gone.

The winds and the woods had the sound of a lyre,

And my feet were tangled by many a briar,

And the sun went out and the moon mounted higher,

And the tall thick grasses I trod upon

Were soft and sweet to my rapid feet,

And the man I walked with was one

Who loved nature much more than I did.

For myself, being proud, whatever my pride did,

That I forgot in the simple pleasure

Of being very much at my leisure ;

So that, in the very heart of the wood

A bird's voice sang to my blood.

January 29, 1920.

DUST

THERE is a demon in the mind
And an evil wind that blows behind
The dust of the world in one heap to bind.

He follows us as the moon the sun—
He says, "What have I done? I have done
The deed that I dare not think upon."

We fly from him to the arms of sleep,
And sleep refuses sleep. We steep
Our senses in the dust that's a-heap.

April 3, 1919.

SONG

WHEN there's a noise among the dead
That perished in the night
Enough to waken in their bed
Slim girls with heels that smite
A man's bare flesh, heels with their heels,
And bodies side by side,
It's awful to think what a dead man feels
With Death for his only bride.

1919.

THE ADDER

If anything on earth be found
To root our feet upon the ground
It must be one
Thing and one single thing alone :
A glass of wine
That makes the sun much less divine
And makes the subtle moon to wain
And casts the slayer from the slain.

After the solace of our verse
The next thing is the Art to curse
Someone we hate.

“ O Adder at my garden gate
That have your passions night by night,
Please me and bite
Before the sun has fallen low
Mine enemy and not your foe.”

At which mine Adder ceased to glide,
And glared at me in sullen pride
And lifted up
His head that does not care to stoop,
And said to me :
“ Nay, not thine ancient enemy,
For he is less than anything——
Less than the least—to deserve my sting.

“ The poison that I hide within
This sinful thing that is my skin,

The Adder

From evil sprung,
Surges into my cloven tongue.
The Devil made
Me out of some unholy shade ;
But, as you see I suck this root,
The Devil has no cloven foot.

“ Once in the Garden of God I trod,
When Satan was mine only God ;
And, by these stings
The Devil knows if I had wings.
There Lilith grew
Out of a drop of poisoned dew ;
And, by her blood, by which I fell,
Beware of the Garden-Gate of Hell ! ”

1919.

SALOME

WHEN Salome lifting up
In her painted hands the cup,
Symbol of her virginhood,
Her perverse, pure eyes malign
See, instead of signs of wine,
Frantic, to her vision, blood.

One foot twisted in advance
In the rhythm of the dance
Beats upon the perfumed floor.
Now a sound upon her jars
Like the sound of iron bars,
Like the clashing of a door.

The winds tangle round her waist,
On her lips she feels the taste,
Taste forbidden to her lips.
What is this that she drinks in ?
Is it that the House of Sin
Her imagination grips ?

Morbid ardour in her grows,
In her cheek no colour glows,
Heat of anguish in her stirs :
What is this she sees in space,
Hanging in mid-air, a face,
Lifeless, sinister as hers ?

Salome

Stung by sterile stings of drouth
All the hotness of her mouth
Makes her aching senses thirst
For that thing that cannot be :
Hate of her Virginity,
Seizes on her, She, the Accursed !

Shaken as the snakes in grass
Eyes her wan Herodias,
Daughter of a King of Kings.
Herod, writhing on his throne,
Feels her fingers to the bone
Clutching at his jewelled rings.

1915.

THE FLAMES OF HELL

THESE women had gold hair about their brows
While they were living : now the worm feels that,
Feeding upon their flesh. They shall rise up,
Not till *that* day, when God shall call for them ;
But they shall rise. O women that have sinned,
Shall God have pity ? God shall not have pity.
There is much gold hair that the flames of hell
Shall take fast hold on. Bodies are not white
For heaven, where the blood shall wash them clean :
These women's bodies are too white ; sweet scents
Burn fiercely ; there's a fragrant pile for hell.
O mystery of beauty, and this flesh
God hath no part in ! yet so beautiful.
Man born of woman, born under the law,
Conceived in sin, sins most of all in this,
And takes damnation on him with a kiss.
And these lips rotted into dust ! Graves hide
The end of women's beauty ; a kind friend,
Close and discreet ; but we'll not think of that.
Paris would loathe his Helen could he see her,
But Paris too is dust. I'm breathing yet,
Although I haunt the tombs ; and are there not
Women with golden hair about their brows,
This side the mould ? and they are calling me,
They smile, their eyes are as a light, I run,
I would embrace them, and drink down at once
Death, and the second Death. O, I am sick,
Sick toward the ending, and mine eyes draw in

The Flames of Hell

Distempered visions. But this kills me. Come,
Women my flesh and spirit tremble for ;
Delay no longer, O delay not, see,
I call to you, I stretch my hands, come, come,
I cannot do without you—It is vain
This violence of passion leaves me faint.
Dead women, be my brides once more. Not Death
Shall be more amorous of you ; not the clods
Clip you with closer arms. Mine, mine, all mine.
And there is all this beauty underground,
And there their worm dieth not, nor is the flame
Quenched, but these fair women that have sinned
Shall have their portion in the burning lake,
And so live beautiful for ever. God,
Have this much pity, let men look across
The great gulf hewn of nether air, that holds
A void of footless darkness, let them see
Pale, with their branch of barren palm, their robes
Glimmering in the brighter light than day,
Those saints their rivals : grant them this, O God !
They, beautiful for ever, shall rejoice
Even in the flames of hell, despising still
Those women who are haggard even in heaven !
December 29, 1887.

EPITHALAMIUM

SISTER, the bride-bed waits : sister for thee ;
The bride-bed waits for thee and me.
Sisterly hours together, hand in hand,
Beat out an epithalamy :
Love and the night, come softly, hand in hand !

Love and the night, come swiftly, hand in hand,
That we may reach the longed-for land,
O night of love, before the dark be dead,
Or the pale morning understand
Why the moon faints and why the stars lie dead.

Sister, the moon shall faint, the stars lie dead,
Sister, above our marriage-bed,
The fruitless stars, the chaste and sterile moon,
While we, in maiden nuptial wed,
Taunt with her single maidenhood the moon.

Sister, O sister maiden, maiden moon,
The joy, the aching joy to swoon
Into thine arms, into thine arms to die !
Sweet bride, thy maiden bridegroom, soon
Into the rapture of thine arms to die !

1893.

PIERROT

I THAT am Pierrot, pray you pity me !
To be so young, so old in misery :
See me, and how the winter of my grief
Wastes me, and how I whiten like a leaf,
And how, like a lost child, lost and afraid,
I seek the shadow, I that am a shade,
I that have loved a moonbeam, nor have won
Any Diana to Endymion.

Pity me, for I have loved too well
The hope of the too fair impossible.
Ah, it is she, she, Columbine ! again
I see her, and I woo her, and in vain.
She lures me with her beckoning finger-tips ;
How her eyes shine for me, and how her lips
Bloom for me, roses, roses, red and rich !
She waves to me the white arms of a witch
Over the world : I follow, I forget
All, but she'll love me yet, she'll love me yet !

No, I shall never, never call you mine,
Escaping and eternal Columbine.
Once Watteau knew you, a Marquise ; you played
A pastoral of love in masquerade.
King Louis turned his head to see you pass,
Superbly, at Versailles, upon the grass,
And I, poor Pierrot, turned my head away :
You did not see the tears I wept that day.

Pierrot

Later, you woke from sleep when Deburau
Found me in Paris, fifty years ago.
I beat my wings against the footlights' glare,
You were an actress, and I sought you there ;
And I adored you for your rouge, the grace
Of your fictitious and diviner face ;
But some one brought you. Last, a silhouette,
You mocked me in the magic of Willette,
Flittingly *fin-de-siècle* and feline at
The hostel guarded by a Sable Cat.
Columbine of the ages ! if to-day
I find you, in no masquerade array,
But here, and now : oh ! somewhere, surely, here,
You hide until the moment : nay, appear !

Nay, but I see you : is it you, divine,
Or you, perchance diviner, Columbine ?
I will go seek you, moonbeam, once again,
And if I seek you, must it be in vain ?
Kind friends, I think 'tis she : and if 'tis she,
I, that am Pierrot, pray you pity me !

1897.

DANTE IN HELL

WHEN Dante Alighieri entered that hollow place
Hell and saw wild whirls of confused smoke,
Like glaring tapers round a painted face,
And found himself among such evil folk
God had condemned—for where in heaven a space
For such as these?—and saw under the yoke
Of shameful sins, the inevitable disgrace
The earth endured ere the first woman spoke
One word to the man she loved not ; then his eyes
Darkened a little, and as Virgil came
Nearer to him, the whole sense of that impure
Air and its heat and its intolerable flame
Tortured his vision, and he felt the obscure
Desire of an unenviable Paradise.

1919.

SONNET

O DIVINE Water loved by Æschylus,
Who, God in Man, created Tragedy
Out of void Chaos' aching agony,
And, out of the anguish of Prometheus
Gave to the Fire-Bringer who rules over us
More than Zeus gave man, fire-fledged Sorcery
And a bewitched life over the Caspian Sea,
Loveless, but adored by the winds perilous
That toss the sea-waves into hostile storms ;
Seeing in midnights more prodigious forms,
And in the noon's heats hell's insanities ;
And for his heart, that seat of ancient wrongs,
The winged Oceanides and their scented songs :
Last, God-created Aristophanes.

1919.

SONNET

WHY is it that you use your fascination
Of fatal beauty that has power to ensnare
Even the serpents in their violation
Of all that's sane in webs of woven hair,
And set them into deeds of vile sedition
As rebels round a city mutinous
That fall into the folds of their perdition
And are for that more subtly poisonous ?
Simply that you are impelled by an obsession
To do all evil and to do no good,
As a pure virgin in her first confession
Lets out the secret of her innocent blood,
Nor sees in the hidden monk behind the grate
A conscience-stricken face consumed with hate.

1919.

DEIRDRE

THERE was much crying in the wind
Late last night
As of the crying of a soul that had sinned
And longed for the light.

But I have seen to-day
With John in a café a child
Who seemed so tragic, that play
Was lost to her, never she smiled.

Adorable, passionate,
Loveless, the child in her chair,
Casting her eyes down, sat—
The Sun might have envied her hair.

She had taken my hand, then turned
Her eyes on me, pure as the sky.
If ever a man's heart to her yearned,
Mine did, I know not why.

CAFÉ ROYAL, *November 27, 1917.*

THE HOUR

You might put a little life
Into this sullen hour,
The world is sick of strife :
Why all this lust for power ?

Each minute some man dies :
Dead men rise never again.
The cold and cruel skies
Look down upon the slain.

1918.

THE OLD GYPSY

SHE is too old to see again
The age of threescore years and ten ;
She is as hale as an old tree,
Straight as its shrivelled stem, and dark
And full of wrinkles as its bark ;
Children and grandchildren has she,
Fourteen they are and forty-three,
And sixty years has she been wed,
And never slept in any bed
Under a roof of tile or slate,
And never will, alive or dead,
And whether death come soon or late.
Her hands are heavy with gold rings,
She has three rings of heavy gold
On every finger, earrings old
Of gold, and gold and orange things
For kerchiefs and head-coverings.
Her voice is gentle as a bird's,
And there is savour in her words,
For she, although with stealth she hoards
The private speech her people have,
Knows well the depth of every lav.
Her eyes are secret, and her mouth
A gentle and grave hypocrite ;
She reads the heart of age and youth,
Seeing, not understanding it,
And tells for money half the truth ;

The Old Gypsy

But in her ancient soul there lies,
Deeper than she can ever look,
The roots laid open like a book
Of earth and of our destinies.

1906.

THE JEW

A POOR old man, a crossing-sweeper, stands
Bent on his broom that sweeps a foot of way ;
A fat, furred Jew with jewels on his hands
Passes the crossing-sweeper twice a day.

His eyes are swollen with covetousness and fat,
His fingers swell about his jewelled rings ;
Into the old man's stained and battered hat
A penny, once a month or so, he flings.

The old man, who is humble, poor, and wise,
Takes up the penny and says " Thank you, Sir ; "
And the kind Jew, to purify his eyes,
Rivets them back upon his rings and fur.

1906.

NIGHT AT HAMPSTEAD

THE damp and sweet breath of the night !
Lean out of the window, your cheek on the ivy,
My cheek on your cheek, O my dear and delight !

Look up now, the stars overhead !
Look yonder, the gas where it trembles reflected,
Three flames on the grass with its socket of lead.

See there, where the leaves of the trees,
Black shadows that droop on the wall and its whiteness,
Weave the dark into lace that flaps loose in the breeze.

See the trees, the great trees by the house,
The trees where the light is the ghost of the daylight,
And the trees with the night tangled fast in their boughs.

Dream on then, my dear and delight !
The breath of the world pulses faint in the city,
Here is the damp and sweet breath of the night.

September 7, 1890.

TO A GREY DRESS

THERE's a flutter of grey through the trees :
Ah, the exquisite curves of her dress as she passes
Fleet with her feet in the path where the grass is !

I see not her face, I but see
The swift re-appearance, the flitting persistence—
There !—of that flutter of grey in the distance.

It has flickered and fluttered away :
What teasing regret she has left in my day-dream,
And what dreams of delight are the dreams that one may
dream !

It was only a flutter of grey ;
But the vaguest of vainest impossible chances
Has set my heart beating the way of old dances.

September 8, 1890.

September 30, 1895.

THE FLOODS AND THE ASHES

Love that hath eaten ashes, and hath mingled weeping
Into his drink and bread ;
That hath been in cities fallen, a sentinel keeping
Watch where a host has fled ;
Lovethat hath watched by night when every man was sleeping,
How have men called thee dead ?

The floods have lifted up, O Love our Lord, their voices,
The floods lift up their waves ;
Thou that art mightier than many waters' noises
Shall from the deep sea-graves
Lift up alive the soul that in thy love rejoices,
Love that is Lord and saves.

August 29, 1906.

CLEOPATRA

Your eyes have drunk Eternity :
They haunt me in oblivious hours,
And follow me among the flowers ;
Your eyes hold fast the mystery
Of other memories than ours.

Within your immemorial eyes
There sits the cruelty of Time
In its indifference sublime ;
Empty, and infinitely wise,
Your eyes out-reach the bounds of Time.

I gaze into your endless gaze,
I lose myself as in a sea ;
I lose myself, content to be
A stream that all its nights and days
Lives but to die into the sea.

1890.

BANISHMENT

THAT you should live, be blithe and well,
When I am dead and in my grave,
It seems a thing incredible
If Death be not a lying knave.

My life began with yours, and now
In my sad dark oblivion
I shall not know how long or how
I am to leave you to go on.

I shall be somewhere, I suppose,
For nothing that began can end :
What is it worth to be a rose
And not to recognise one's friend ?

What if the love that makes my soul
A thing identical with you
Should lose in some vast selfless whole
That single self we came into ?

How could I, being that speechless thing,
Cry out, or in the rose's scent
Of inmost ardour breathe and bring
You news out of my banishment ?

December 20, 1907.

IN REGENT'S PARK

Is it the chilly winter grass
That seems as green as if to lay
A carpet for the spring to pass ?
Is it a gladness in the day
That wakes this joy upon my way ?

Is it that idly I observe
The misty trees, the water's white ?
For all my body is a nerve
Strung for the fingers of delight,
And earth is musical with light.

Dear, once we wandered in this park,
Strangers together, side by side,
At the grey falling of the dark ;
And now, how many leagues divide
Our feet, and how the world is wide !

And yet to-day, though you are far
And I am lonely, how my soul
Leaps out to find you where you are,
Because a word has put the whole
Of life into a dream's control !

Love that makes wisdom foolish, makes
The folly of the lover wise,
Who out of dreams of beauty wakes ,
To see the world with subtler eyes,
And turns delight to Paradise.

In Regent's Park

Blind love, that brings the gift of sight,
Makes and unmakes the world anew ;
I see all beauty in the light
Of my imaginings of you :
All's beauty, since a dream came true !

1904.

TO THE DEAD

Is there a waking sorrow in the grave ?
Is it not over, all that holds from sleep ?
No more the heavy-footed hours shall creep
No more in vain man's longing heart shall crave.
The long suspense is over ; earth that gave
Calls back the gift—Ah, who should strive to keep ?
Dust over dust, a little narrow heap
Holds all we love—Ah, who should strive to save ?

Peace, peace is yours, O dead, and yours alone.
What peace hath man, unstable man, whose breath
Serves but in vain to winnow fruitless chaff ?
Yet will he ever seek, who never hath known
The flying phantom Peace, till lastly Death
Writes in that word the final Epitaph.

1899.

HAPPINESS

HAPPINESS, too warm and deep,
Shuts the eyes of love asleep,
Love that watching for the thief
Is only kept awake by grief.
Fear not grief : take grief for a crutch ;
But fear to be happy overmuch.
The heart beats like a passing bell :
All is not well, when all is too well !
And the heart that watches, watches less
When it's well afloat upon happiness.

1905.

A SONG AGAINST SORROW

ONLY there must be no ending !
If your heart's afraid of winter,
Where an open door is standing
Go your ways and do not enter.
If you enter I retain you
For the soft and stormy weather,
And we watch the world together
While you hold me, while I chain you.

Time's a stream and love is fleeting,
And to-day is soon to-morrow,
And the hours grow tired repeating
Joy but not repeating sorrow.
What's the message Time is sending ?
"Roses fade and daylight closes,
Lovers' joys are like the roses ;"
Only, there must be no ending !
1906.

THE OWL

I HEARD the hooting of the White Owl,
Not as far off as the sea,
And in the sultry passion of the night
I knew not what came to me ;
Only the voice of an inhuman thing
Thrilled in my ears,
And I stood lonely, listening,
As if from the eternal years
The Owls had hooted, as if the Owls had sinned
And had eaten some insane root,
The moon, the night, the mystery of the wind,
Myself, and the White Owl's hoot.

1919.

THE SONG OF THE POPPIES

It is a great thing to be born,
A greater thing to live.
Red and black poppies, you are torn
Out of the heart of darkness ; scent
That I breathe is poisonous.
For my scent are you meant
Things forgotten to forgive ?
Leaf with leaf has grandeur and
I think that you understand
Why it is you have to live,
Flame without shame, luxurious,
Dragging at the roots of us.
Rudely rooted from the soil,
For you face me in my room,
Dazing me with your perfume,
Not one breath of air to soil
Your beauty stranger than all things.
For you are the Kings of Kings
In the region of the flowers.
In the halls of Hades you
Counted the enchanted hours
For ravished Proserpine his bride,
Where the black-winged raven flew
By the sullen Styx's side.
Earth cries out of her acrid womb,
As she sees you : Can I forgive
All that glory of your life,

The Song of the Poppies

I that am neither maid nor wife,
I that know not night from morn ?
It is a great thing to be born,
A greater thing to live.

May 27, 1918.

SONG

My silks I put away
Into a scented room
Where the night-moths can play
With their own perfume.

And then away I went,
But left a lovely cloth
To perfume with its scent
The perfumed moth.

1915.

SONG OF THE FIRE

THERE is a great passion in the Fire
That glows with glamour and flames
Into colours more fierce than Fame's,
And the Song of the fire is the song of its desire.

The fire eats the heart of the wood
Until into ashes it turns,
And the wood burns and the fire burns
And the fire's blood drinks the wood's blood.

1918.

THE ROSE AND THE RAIN

HER rose fell off in the rain
And I picked it out of the mud.
The scene was Madrid in Spain,
And why did it touch my blood?

She knew (what nobody knows)
What was the reason in Spain
That I never gave back her rose,
That she followed me back in the rain.
1918.

A VISION OF KINGS

KINGS have cast down their crowns for this
One word of the Unattainable.
The very Slaves of the Abyss
Are named by this. Hell is not Hell,
Nor is God only in Heaven alone :
Silent in Heaven is God's name.
So, as time's measured by a stone
And all the stars are mocked by flame
And the world moves always and the Sun
Shines and the moon fades out in turn
And all that we have ever done
Shall, somehow, as the world might, burn :
So, all the Fate that falls on Kings
Shall fail as fails each period,
And the beginning and the end of things
Move somewhere out of sight of God.

1918.

THE CROSS

WHEN Jesus Christ was crucified
A sudden darkness fell.
The hearts in the three Maries cried :
“ He hath gone down to Hell ! ”
And then again the darkness broke
And still the Cross was there.
Satan behind the Cross like smoke
Tossed in the wind his hair.

Over their heads a vulture swung,
One heard the gallows creak,
And still nailed on His Cross there hung
Christ and His eyes did speak.
Then Satan turned his back in spite,
His shadow transverse fell.
Judas Iscariot, hot as night,
Gaped like the mouth of Hell.

August 13, 1918.

IV. SILHOUETTES

(To JOSÉ MARIA DE ELIZONDO)

A DEATH IN THE FOREST

THE wind is loud among the trees to-night,
It sweeps the heavens where the stars are white.
I know : it is the angel with the sword.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord !

The wind is loud, I hear it in my brain,
I hear the rushing voices of the rain,
Hers in the rain, and his that once implored.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord !

Hands in the trees, hands in the flowing grass,
They wave to catch my spirit as I pass.
I have no hope to pass the ghastly ford.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord !

I see her tresses, floating down the wind :
Her eyes are bright : it is for these I sinned.
We sinned, and I have had my own reward.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord !

She has a little mouth, a little chin :
God made her to be beautiful in sin,
God made her perfectly, to be adored.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord !

A Death in the Forest

We sinned, but it is I who pay the price :
I say that she shall dwell in Paradise.
For me the feast in hell is on the board.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord !
ZARAGOZA, *May 3, 1891.*

IN THE CATHEDRAL AT BARCELONA

Out of the sun a sudden shade,
The shadow of the wings of God,
As if the Holy Dove had laid
Dim quiet on the holy sod.

What cool, what infinite repose !
Behold the nearer heaven on high,
And, through the window of the rose,
Purple and gold and rose, the sky.

ZARAGOZA, *May* 3, 1891.

BARCELONA

THE white and brown of fifty masts
Chequer the depths of blue below,
Where in the harbour, to and fro,
The little white sails go.

A mule mounts slowly up the hill,
A red-capped peasant, half-asleep,
Nods on his back ; the small black sheep
In slow procession creep.

Far as to where the mountains meet
The sky that gently silvers down
The roofs and windows of the town
Swarm grey and white and brown.

Filmy and blue the sky above,
A burning blue the depths below,
Where in the harbour, to and fro,
The little white sails go.

BARCELONA, *April* 30, 1891.

PANTORBO

SALVATOR ROSA piled those rocks,
Thus wildly, under that wild light,
Or else fantastic Nature mocks
His finite with her infinite,

Grey ruinous heights that rise in towers,
That fall in gorges down the steep,
Stark trees that never feel the showers,
And rocky torrents buried deep.

Tormented wrathful ghosts of hills
That bear the scars of ancient woes,
And chafe beneath the doom that fills
Their hollows with a loathed repose.

PANTORBO, *May* 7, 1891.

MADRID

A BEGGAR smoking a cigar,
Here at the corner of the street,
Strums feebly on an old guitar.

He strums an air half sad, half sweet,
An air of laughter and of cries,
Here at the corner of the street.

The beggar lifts his sightless eyes
While the pathetic music thrills
The air with laughter and with cries.

Rattling the plate that never fills
A woman reaches piteous hands
While the pathetic music thrills.

Wrapt in his cloak the beggar stands,
Impassive, while the wife implores—
A woman reaching piteous hands.

MADRID, *May* 5, 1891.

IN THE PRADO

THE black mantilla drapes with grace
The lustrous blackness of her hair,
And to the pallor of her face
Gives that bewitching air.

Her closed fan rests against her cheek
Just where the dimple might have been ;
She turns her head, and seems to seek
Her subjects, proudly, like a queen.

I see the lady of my dream :
'Tis she, I am not here in vain.
Her body's rhythm, and the gleam
Her eyes are lit with—this is Spain !
MADRID, *May* 5, 1891.

BORDEAUX

THE dull persistence of the rain,
Long melancholy streets, the vain
Desire, the hopeless wandering ;
Here every woman has a face
Inexorably commonplace,
Ennui is over everything.

Hour after leaden hour goes by,
I watch the leaden-coloured sky,
I watch the rain still fall and fall.
Women and gaiety and flowers—
When they are ours, why, all is ours !
Here Ennui is the lord of all.

HÔTEL NICOLET, BORDEAUX, *May* 8, 1891.

NIGHT AT ARLES

DOWN the deserted street
A figure black from head to feet,
Save where a lifted skirt betrays
A gleam of whiteness, strays.

The moonlight, softly shed
Upon her veiled and stately head,
Lays all its ardour of repose
About her as she goes.

No woman queenlier stept,
Nor goddess, since Diana slept
Beside her sisters, when the gods
Perished from their abodes.

NEAR MIRANDA, *May* 7, 1891.

ROME

HERE, at the summit of this sacred wood,
I seem to be half-way from Rome to heaven.
Eternal as the world, I see the seven
Hills of the world's desire, that have withstood
The lust of Kings, God's jealous fatherhood,
The snare of ancient beauty that was given
Back to the world for the world's woe, and even
The Barbarian's insolent and destroying brood.

The clouds wander above me, and beneath
The vague Campagna wanders desolate ;
I see the roofs, the turrets and the dome.
And the pale air seems to exhale like breath
The melancholy and most delicate
And haughty and remembering soul of Rome.
ROME, *January 23, 1897.*

IN THE CAMPAGNA

LOVE dies not, but it sleeps :
Here, where the peace of Rome,
Passing all knowledge, keeps
My heart within its home,
I have known that repose
Which only slumber knows.

Here where my feet are set
Upon the asphodels,
I can for once forget
The world contains aught else
But these, the grass, the seven
Hills, and the opal heaven.

Peace nestles from the sky
In these soft veils of air ;
Bid love prepare to die,
Which is mine only care.
If he his breath still keeps,
Hush, be content : love sleeps.

ROME, *January* 10, 1897.

AT THE THREE FOUNTAINS

HERE, where God lives among the trees,
Where birds and monks the whole day sing
His praise in a pleasant ease,

O heart, might we not find a home,
Here, after all our wandering ?
These gates are closed, even on Rome.

Souls of the twilight wander here ;
Here, in the garden of that death
Which was for love's sake, need we fear

How sharp with bitter joy might be
Love's lingering, last, longed-for breath,
Shut in upon eternity ?

ROME, *March* 13, 1897.

VESTIGIA. I. ROMAN MEDALLION

AH ! if you knew how vain are these delicious tears !
How little so divine and desultory a thing
As this hour's love, alas, will seem, remembering
These tears, this hour, and this hour's love, in other years !

The chaplet of white fading roses, one by one,
Petal from petal falling on some pensive day ;
Noontide upon the shining beach, while on the bay
A fisher's boat came slowly drifting with the sun ;

Yes, and the vase of precious porcelain that you broke ;
The day you lost that ring, the day you bought this gem :
You will remember these things, and, ah yes, with them
The day that your heart answered mine before it spoke.

ROME, *March 3*, 1897.

II. TO LENA IN NAPLES

LET me not promise to remember you
Because you have been either fair or kind ;
Are there not many kind fair women who
Have filled and who have faded from my mind ?

And yet I think that when in days to be
I think of Naples and these April days,
Something of you will wander back to me
Along the undiscoverable ways.

Ah, what ? That we have seen some Carmen die,
Or some spectacular burial of the Christ,
You may remember, if you will ; but I.

The satin of your ears, your cheeks' fine silk,
And that your mouth was like a melon sliced,
And that your neck tasted as fresh as milk.

NAPLES, *April* 17, 1897.

HYMN TO GOD

I

FATHER of Energy,
Pattern of Beauty, uncreated Light,
Fire of the flaming deep, most awful height
Of Air, and endless motion of the Sea,
True centre of the Earth, Imagination's
Immovable foundations,
Wings of the Wind, and thought out-reaching Thought,
Health of the spirit, the sole Music wrought
Out of the spheres' once jangled harmony,
And, lastly, Love ;
Thou, who dost secretly and sweetly move
Through all created things,
Hear while thy mighty creatures cry to thee,
Veiling their proud eyes with their wings.

II

Thy creatures, that have wandered from that line
Thou sett'st them out of Chaos, that have gone
About their many businesses, not Thine,
Saying let my will, not Thy will be done ;
Idolatrous, themselves deeming divine,
Bowing down each other to the other for a sign,
Working for Thee in evil ways that run
Quite round the circle of Thy pure design,
Yet swerve not from the centre ; these in vain
Seek liberty, and pull against a chain,

Hymn to God

They draw but nearer Thee in the rebound ;
Wings have they, yet are rooted to the ground,
Where Thou art ; though unrooted they should fly,
There art Thou also : hear Thy creatures cry.
1903.

HYMN TO THE SEA

I

WHEN I remember, going listlessly
Through the long, loud, bright tumult of the street,
The sea,
There comes a silence into the dull air
Thick with resounding blows
As of a battle where vile armies meet ;
And I am suddenly aware
As of a cleansing wind blown suddenly
From somewhere far beyond the mild and sweet
Half-human regions of the rose,
A wind that has no message to repeat,
That calls, and no man knows
What voice is calling in the sea.

II

I never loved the earth, that like a mother
Talks to her children in a voice they know,
Drawing her children close to one another
And whispering old tales of long ago.
I have no human love for man, my brother,
My dreams are not his dreams, and I go
A lonely way alone.
I go alone to the uncompassionate sea ;
I hear no private sorrow in its moan ;
There are no tears
In its bright, sorrowless crying, and from me

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Hymn to the Sea

The glittering friend I talk with never hears
A whimpering for human sympathy.

III

Call to me, call by night,
Let me come out into the moonless dark.
I see a vague shape growing slowly white
Out of the night, and, hark !
The soft plunge of the breakers on the sand,
And the sharp shriek
Of the resisting pebbles, as a hand
Clutches the land,
And then unclasps, and, indolently weak,
Scatters the spoils it only seems to seek.
Call to me out of the night,
In the irresistible, old, unknown way ;
Say nothing ; what is there to say ?
Is there a word for delight ?
I see the darkness moving, like a cloud,
With rims of gusty light ;
I hear an inarticulate voice crying aloud.

IV

Unknown spirit that calls
To the mysterious spirit housed in walls
Of the body, and desiring liberty,
Free spirit, promising
Nothing but to be free,
Call me this wandering
And always restless guest

Hymn to the Sea

That will not be at home within my breast,
This never satisfied,
Fluctuant, foster-brother of the tide ;
Call subtly, and release
The secret of the waves' unresting peace,
To set my eager spirit, if not free,
Into some comparable activity.
Call to me mostly when I seem
To move through silken tangles of a dream
Forgetting what wild seabird spirit in me
Cries out for liberty.
Call to me, till, returning to my mind
In the loud city streets, busy with men,
There come cool silence, and the night, and then,
Borne inward to me, overflowing me,
The breath of a salt wind
And the voice of the sea.

1903

HYMN TO AIR

I

BECAUSE the ways of breath
Belong not to the soul,
Which may not even control
How it shall come on death ;
Therefore, beholding thus
What secret and wise care
Silently follows us,
Let the soul praise the air !

II

Shadow of life in me,
August familiar, dear
Companion ever near
Whose form I may not see ;
I, when alone I walk
With men walking, or trees,
With this enchanter talk
Of older things than these.

III

This breath that enters in
To warm and purify
The source of life which I
Deem all my own within,
Has felt the earth reel round
From outer space that lies
Somewhere beneath the ground,
Somewhere above the skies.

Hymn to Air

IV

This humble unseen friend
Whom I go elbowing,—
What if it bid take wing
And in the spirit ascend
Where foot hath never trod,
Where bird hath never come,
Where man may look on God
And his thought find a home?

V

Joy wraps me round in air,
On mountain-heights I drink
Rapture, until I think
My being everywhere
Into the universe ;
I laugh with divine mirth
To see the pretty, fierce
Babe-scamblings of the earth.

VI

Yet, day by day more sure,
This mercy, which I praise,
Silently all my ways
Doth follow, and endure,
Buffeted, to control
The ceaseless watch of death :
I praise thee with my soul,
Delicate air, for breath.

1903.

HYMN TO BEAUTY

THERE is a tyrannous lord and taskmaster
Whom men call Beauty. To be born his slave
Is to be sleepless and a wanderer
Always by day and night, and not to have
The promise of much quiet in the grave.

The colours of the world are in a plot
To snatch my spirit from me through the eyes ;
They dance before me in a weedy knot
Of woodland broideries.
They lean to catch me from the woven skies,
Woo me in light, and half
Tempt with the sea's immeasurable laugh.
Beauty is too much with me : I would live
A free man, not a fugitive,
Be for an interval
The hourglass of the hours of sun and shower,
And for one hour
Feel with the drowsy oxen in the stall
Nothing at all.
Only, it may not be ;
For the avenging Beauty follows me,
And whips me from my sloth
And goads me on to some new adoration.
I cannot walk through any city street
Where labour hardly elbows by starvation,
But I must meet
The inhuman Beauty both

Hymn to Beauty

In subtly wasted cheeks and in the spilth
Of the enriching gutter's plague-green filth.

Beauty is poured
Out of the vats of darkness ; Beauty runs
Through leakages of suns,
And scatters in the splinters of the seas.
This naked wall is high enough to hoard
Legions of beauty in its crevices,
Enough for the immortal soul to endure ;
And the immortal sky is not more pure,
Nor God
More empty of defect, than this brown clod.

O infinite
And endless spirit of the world's disguise,
Spirit of lies,
Beauty, the very light
Wherein we see, the sight
We see by, and the thing we seem to see,
Either give me
Humility to be indeed content
With that which thou hast lent,
And grace to take it simply as my right,
Or power not less divine
Than thine,
That I may make a world and call it mine.

1903.

THE HUMAN FACE

To imagine God with a human face
Is the utmost human disgrace ;
For since the Spirit of Evil trod
Earth, none has seen the image of God.
I speak not of Jesus, He was a child,
God in Man, therefore undefiled ;
For in the Virgin Mary's womb,
He leapt, so small in so little a room ;
And, as He greatened span by span,
Never was there a lovelier man,
Never one more loved by a woman :
For being human He was inhuman.
By the Jews He was crucified
And still the Jews say that He died :
But I say no : for from evil to worse
Evil the Jews are given for a curse
Miserly souls and unbelief.
Judas, who hanged himself, was a Thief.
July 6, 1919.

NOTTE VENEZIANE

I SLEPT in Venice. The bright windy day
Merged into night, along the Zattere,
Over the long Guidecca luminous.
The night was bright and windy ; and 'twas thus
I fell asleep and let the moonlight fall
Across my face, and scatter on the wall ;
And thus I came into the moonlight spell.
I dreamed ; and in my dream a darkness fell
Upon the land and water, and the night
Poured like a flood across the infinite.
Then, as I dreamed, the billowy darkness broke
At some soft, slow, insinuating stroke,
And lo ! a little core of light began
To waken softly, and its rays outran,
And, by insensible degrees, increased
Into the semblance of a phantom East ;
And the whole night gathered and overflowed,
Flood upon flood, until a shining road
Of level water lay out endlessly
Into the outer reaches of the sea.
I floated forth lightly upon it, and
Suddenly, round me, there was no more land,
But rioting from the depths of the sea's caves,
The shining floor broke into hollow waves,
And rocked the house about me, and drove me on
Into the night of waters. Land was gone,
The whole live Earth shrank like a startled snail
Into the shell of heaped-up waters, pale

Notte Veneziane

As moonlight in the moonlight, and now curled
Under and over and round about the world.
And the waves drew me, and the treacherous night
Into the circle of its infinite
Would fain have sucked me, and I saw the moon
Laughing an evil laugh, and the stars swoon
Into an ecstasy of merriment.
Then, knowing I was wholly lost, I sent
A great cry shouting up into the sky,
And leapt upright, and with an echoing cry
Over my head I heard the waters hiss ;
And I fell slowly down the sheer abyss,
Age after endless age of such intense
And unimaginably sharp suspense,
That soul and body parted at the stroke ;
And with the utter anguish I awoke,
And saw the night grow softly into day
Outside my windows on the Zattere.

VENICE, *March* 31, 1894.



FOR *API*

“To speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movement of all animals, and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside.”—

WALT WHITMAN.

“Vine of youth’s life, and the sweet deaths of love.”—CRASHAW.

HE is older than the time of Christ, and the Christian religion has nothing to say about him. Was it, at the beginning, because he had been a god or idol among heathens, and then, as now, was nature nothing that could possibly be regenerated? In our days the Spaniards are cruel to him because they say that he is not a Christian. A Catholic Bishop in England has said, I believe, much the same irrelevant nonsense. How should anything in nature become Christian, or be any the less perfect in its unconsciousness, because being a dog or a flower it has no mind that we can reason with? It is one of the world's joys that there are beings which cannot speak, and so cannot talk or intrude on the mind. Beauty in all but animals is troubling, a hallucination, a snare, a thing which can be cruel and drive men mad. "Helen," I have been reading in an old chap book of "The Destruction of Troy," "was the most exact beauty," but, being "wanton and amorous," set Troy town on fire.

Burroughs, is it not, has told you that animals cannot think. Why should they? Instinct is deeper than thought, in us, and why not deep enough in them to remove the need of thought? Thought was made by reason, which came, a stranger into nature, and has been a leash and trouble there in our own part of it ever since. The beasts are spared, yet they have foresight and memory, and they live, like Epicureans, in the day. Their beauty is a useless thing made for love and admiration, and it suffices to itself, having the four aids of beauty in life: strength, energy, the joy of movement, the ecstasy of repose. They are our models to us, how to live in that part of us which will never be taught.

For Api

Let them still be our idols, let them be as they were to the heathens, little gods made out of men.

And they are our friends. Argus was the faithful friend of any man in Greece. Men have been traitors. But has a dog? Men have forgotten the face of a woman whom they have loved; but has a dog forgotten the footsteps of his master? What are we that should judge them if they follow the chase? do not we? They fight over a bone, but others, and we, for no better reason fight with one another over the dead bones of many men. My dog, since I wrote this, has come over to me, and taking the pencil out of my hand, made me play with him; and now he is content and is sitting on my shoulder looking at the pencil as it begins to write again. Soon he will come down, and be on my knees with all four legs in the air, like the palm of a Japanese monster in prints, and sleep so. What good would it be for me if he knew that I was writing about him, or if I knew why he should force me to so new a task? He is exquisite, adores me, and is perfectly disobedient—what more can I ask of him?

II

I COULD not praise him if I could describe him without seeming to. He is small, black, and has no tail, or the mere hint of one, and is larger than the toy breed of Shipperke which we see in some of our suburbs ; a true Dutch breed of the barge-dogs who go up and down the canals in Holland, watch-dogs over floating boats and houses. I do not know why it is Api has the activities and graces of the wild beast, and why he has no ordinary dog-smell, but the smell of the wild beast. His flanks, when he runs, are like a young tiger's, and he still runs, at a year old, untamely. He loves the woods, the hedges, and water, and will chase circles for joy in the grass until he falls there exhausted ; and so too, in a kind of swoon of sated speed, in one or another of his infinite poses. His baby fierceness was also a tiger's, and it is not yet out of him, though it has turned gentler and to a part of his tenderness. And this flying thing is more luxurious than any fireside cat, a lover of the fire, of cushions, and of sleep. His poses in sleep are of an infinite variety, one stranger than another ; the forefeet rigid in the air, and feet fallen open, the head thrown backward up the cushioned angle of a sofa, and, almost always, one back leg laid delicately out beyond the line of the body, with a lovely effect of design. Each foot is of equal daintiness, each leg too slender to seem able to support so small a body ; the mouth, with its white teeth and black palate, has a snake's under-jaw.

The body jet black, with a neck that swells like a snake's, but all over smooth, with straight hair, shining, velvety,

For Api

waving a little on the back in exactly the way grass waves under certain blowings of wind, is, with its small and lovely head, a kind of living jewel. It is enough to say that the eyes would be human, if human beings could concentrate so much of themselves into their eyes.



III

THE little boy : when uneducated and then tamed or disguised, he is the most odious creature on earth. The manners of a dog are naturally gentle, those of a boy are naturally rough and inconsiderate. Nature in him works by no such kindly instinct ; nature, on the way to make a man, lingers over a long piece of shabby workmanship. The average boy has no sense of anything but his own pleasure, which is trivial ; his delight is to be noisy, and to behave with an uncouth energy which is neither the directed force of the man nor the exquisitely tempered wildness of the dog. When a dog is distinguished, he is without grace or sense of gracious things. Because he is a savage.

IV

His nose is a weather-glass to my movements ; his ears are awake in sleep if I move in the room ; his eyes open from sleep to follow me and take notice of what I am doing. He listens to what I am saying, with his head turned up sideways, then closes his eyes and lays his chin down contentedly on his paws, drawing a long breath.

He is lying in the armchair before the fire, all his body offered softly to the heat, like a flower opening to the sun. His eyes are closed, and now and then a leg twitches nervously, the body stretches a little; he becomes conscious of the delight into which he is to plunge. The fire is the most adorable thing to him on the earth; he loves the sun, and follows it as it trickles about the floor; but the sun can be too strong. He rushes into the shade of trees or into the cottage with open doors and windows and brick floors. When we light the logs on the open hearth, and a great golden sheet of flame rushes for some moments up the wide chimney, he starts back, afraid of all modes of things. But soon he comes back, stands and gazes into the burning logs, slowly sits down before it and puts both feet on the raised bricks of the hearth. He draws nearer and nearer to the flame, as in some fascination; and he sometimes has to be dragged back lest he should enter bodily into it. In the morning he has been found asleep on the scarcely cold ashes.

VI

HIS gravity, humility, absoluteness of repose in sleep, in which he has a thousand attitudes, all gracious, abandoned, luxurious and flawless. Sleep relaxes his nervous swift body, and leaves it a thing of soft contours, which change from moment to moment from curve to curve. Sometimes the legs are stretched out rigid, sometimes the body turns over on its back, the hinder legs laid apart, wide open, showing the white belly, the front legs are doubled over at the joint, and hang like little hands drooping from the wrists; the head is sometimes turned aside, the throat in the air. Sometimes one eye slowly opens, looks out for a moment, then closes.

VII

CHRISTMAS DAY, 1907, Api died. He was born on December 21, 1906, and came to us on February 26, 1907.

The late winter sun was on the little green mound of his grave, and he lay happy and comfortable there. He is to have a Cornish Cross at his head with these words cut into the stone :

Here Api waits for you and me
Under this little apple-tree.

VIII

I CAN scarcely go into my study yet ; my friend died there, under our hopeless eyes, between our hands that could not, for all their love, hold him fast. I see the little princely body, wrapped in the travelling rug, his head raised, as he liked it, on a pillow ; and the floor where he lay dying has become a sacred thing to me, that I can scarcely step on. His presence remembered in every corner of it makes the place august, intolerable.

And he remains, a permanent image in the eyes—in all the places in the house. I see him at the top of the stairs, his little wise black head turned to look through the white banisters, watching me in the hope that I was going out. And then the soft precipitated scramble, and the whole eager body laughing with the thought of the open air. The bed that he leapt on every morning, bringing us joy ; the corner of the eiderdown nearest to the fire, the sly head finding its friendly way under the bedclothes, to lie motionless, warm, breathing gently in our arms : but I dare not think of it. I must put it out of my mind and out of the sight of my eyes, and keep it hidden in my heart.

Everything we had in the world, the very hope of things to come, we would have given to save him ; but God was too cruel or too kind, and took him.

Are we not greatedened by the exaltation of a sorrow beyond the resources of resistance ? And are we not ennobled when the soul is crushed under the weight of powers that we had forgotten ? Only then do we understand life, only

For Api

then do we cease to be trivial. Sorrow gives distinction to the soul.

At first we seek to forget sorrow, to drown it in noise or oblivion ; but gradually it comes back and takes hold of us and becomes our guest. Unbidden, we accept it, and recollection sits down with it by our hearth, an old friend.

IX

It was on Christmas Day that he died, in the dark of the night not long before the beginning of day. It was four days after his first birthday. We had bought him little presents for Christmas—one a blue balloon the colour of the sky. He never played with it, but he watched it with grave interest, as we set it a-sail in the air before him. As it was the last thing he had looked at, and as I could not bear to see it after him, I burst it between my hands. I put the little blue rags on his body, inside the silk shawl in which we buried him; thinking that God might perhaps mend them some day, and give back the balloon to him for a plaything.

HE died, after a tiny struggle, and one harsh cry, with his wonted decorum ; we did not know the exact instant when his breath stopped. The heart remained in him so long, he lay so like one asleep, that we listened for breath at his mouth, and felt at his heart for one last motion, hardly believing that he could be dead. His legs stretched out and stiffened as they often did in sleep, but they had stiffened for ever. He lies so in his little grave, in one of the images of his sleep, as if still reaching out in imagination to the wind and sun.

It was strange to be able to say, in the midst of our regret, that he had chosen, with his usual tact, the moment to go. Had he lived he would never, I think, have been long without some small ailment which would have checked sadly that joy of life which was his whole enjoyment. A man may be sick, and his mind whole, and he may still live an exquisite life. But bodily strength, physical joy, is the whole life of the beast, and without it his life is broken and a failure. Here was a double danger, from the brutality of chance and of man and boys. He was helpless against both, for he was irresponsible, untractable, untamable (which were part of his delight), and he would not always let us save him from his enemies. A bullock once trampled upon him in a slaughter-house, and I doubt if he was the same after it ; he was the mark of boys' stones, and tramps' shoes, whom his bright bark had infuriated. He went a-hunting over forbidden fields, and I once came between him and a farmer's lifted gun. The general world was against him ; he was too rare, too personal, to be under-

For Api

stood ; and we, who knew him, could but do our best, never certain that we could save him from himself. So, for a little while, he survived, had his way, loved the air, the sun, the fields and woods, and gave us his whole heart. Then he left us, having achieved perfection.

And we, too, we have in our love and knowledge of him, once in our lives achieved entire satisfaction. The love of a man or a woman is a bitter, dangerous thing, but this was perfect on his part and on ours. His love was gentle and fiercer than that of a woman, and his kisses and bitings were more than any Catullus dreamed of. His love for me was a constant watch and attention ; for her a delighted comradeship. He was my friend and lover, and her play-fellow. He was called in his due time, and did not protest nor delay ; but he is waiting for us under the little apple-tree in the orchard, where we shall lie down some day by his side.

XI

WE were sometimes too blind to see that he was a link drawing us together, for he hated either of us to go away from him and leave him alone with the other. It seemed to us sometimes that he was a division rather than a link, and the jealous care of him often turned me bitter and endangered the peace between us. There were moments when a kind of angry indifference seemed to grow up out of our love for him.

He had but one friend besides ourselves in the world, and that was Julia Marlowe. She alone understood something of him, and gave him a little love. He had chosen her at sight.

I write about him what I dare not think alone, because it will help me, for the time, to put my grief for him, the vividness of my sense of loss, a little farther away. I would do him homage, as I know that I did when he was living, and I can only do it in written words. A few people will know what they mean. The rest I would leave astonished, and I would take pleasure in their wondering. See, I would say, I have told them my secret, fearing to have said some too intimate thing, and they have not found out my meaning ; they leave the best for me.

If I think of the softness of his body, the love in his eyes, the joy on his flower-like feet, of his speed, luxury in rest, is not the mere naming them a relief from the ache of the heart ?

I can sit in my study now sometimes, and feel the tragic beauty of his death there like a presence consecrating it. I

For Api

think rather of his actual dying in peace, than of the pain, the struggling for breath, the self-absorption of a body feeling itself ending, which had held us in useless silence, in vain service, during the few days when we could still hope. When the impossible thing had happened, I seemed to awaken out of a dull sleep ; I saw everything as it was, and I began, as if mechanically, to gather up all the bottles and other things which had been meant to save him : they seemed to me now an ugly irrelevance in a room where something irretrievable had happened, and I took them one by one out of the room and down the stairs, that I might not desecrate that ultimate presence. I came back and looked at him, and knew that he was dead, and had no idea what that was to mean to me ; and we lifted him from the rug on the floor to the pink cushion on the green sofa where he slept at night ; and I kissed him for the last time, and covered him with a shawl, and we went speechless and weeping out of the room, and then turned back, not able to believe that he was dead ; and then I dragged her out of the room, and we sat together in brief talk and long silences, until the dawn found us sleepless and faint, and condemned to face the visage of a new day, which was the first dreary beginning of a new life.

I had thought at first, being too stunned to think, that we would bury him in our meagre London garden, which he always hated ; and I went out early in the morning, when all the shops were shut for the holiday, to borrow a spade. No one had a spade to lend, and as I came back disheartened, the thought came. I said " we will take him down to Wittersham, and we will bury him in the orchard which we are planting in the field outside our cottage, which

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For Api

he always loved ; he shall lie in our own earth which is ours for all time." We carried his body safely by road ; the gay Callot Sœurs dress-box, with its pink ribbons pricked on the white paper, which was all we had in which to carry him, lay at our feet in the motor as if it were some finery of the minute. We chose our tree, and reverent hands dug a little grave out of the earth, and we laid him as if he were looking out over the fields to the water and the low hills beyond.

XII

HE chose his own moment. Can a flower be more lovely at this or at that moment of growing? It is perfect at this moment: do not think of to-morrow, but remember that yesterday it was not. So comes and goes all the beauty of the world without staying. Be thankful for to-day.

He is the only person to whom I have ever been completely kind. If there is ever any judgment between us, he will bear witness to me. From the time when he crawled a curled inch or two of soft blackness to my feet, to the day when he died at my knee, he has never reproached me for an unkindness. We made no display of love to each other, but our two lives intermingled: now are they, in the secret places of being, severed.

It was a day made to rejoice in; and as we fled out of London the land opened, and the rough long roads that fled under us, between hedges and the streets of old towns and villages, we got into clear space where there were only the tingling air and the magnificent wind. In that one day the sun conquered winter. We seemed to go down in a triumph, but in our hearts we carried only dead hopes. But that was part of the incalculable irony of things, and we endured the splendour, not without a secret anger.

XIII

His manners were so exquisite that they made us feel ashamed of our own and intolerant of our friends'. He chose among people and things with a faultless discretion. His eyes came as he grew older to be full of intelligence, observation, discrimination. They were too wise for speech: we seemed to become more human at the contact.

His solemn eyes, as if at times they saw and faced the future. Joy passed through them and was eclipsed.

For nearly a year I have been normal, human, like other people, no longer isolated from the men and women whom I meet in the street, but with a new feeling of belonging to them by at least one link of friendliness. The link has gone now, and I walk more lonely, in a self-absorption now wholly returned upon itself. Once I had stepped out of myself for my friend's sake; I had gone where he led me, and in loving him I had come to have some little sympathies for other people. Now I put them again out of my heart and out of my mind lest they should bring me memory.

"The soul doubtless is immortal, if a soul can be discerned," said Browning. I had no more doubt about Api's soul than about mine. Either mine does not exist or his does.

XIV

I HAVE burnt with fire the little coat we bought for him : he would never wear it, so I burnt it that I might destroy everything he did not like. It frizzled in the heat and was gone—cloth, leather, straps, and buckles. It pleased me to destroy it.

His legs used to be rigid in sleep, stretched outright ; and I would not let it frighten me, for it seemed to be a preparation for death. Now when I think of how he lay dead with his legs rigid before him, I am able to remember that it used to be his attitude in sleep.

Let us try to remember his fierce desire to play, his eager attack, his leaping joy, the wild beast instinct that hurled him at a boot, a finger, a hassock, above all a string or tassel, anything that hung and moved and could be caught and taken and held luxuriously between the teeth like a shaken prey.

We talked to him as if he were a child, and he answered with his eyes. When she sat with him in the next room, it seemed as if they were chattering together all the time. Now she is silent, having no one to play with. It is terrible, for both of us, this silence. He understood us so well, and liked us to talk to him.

That a being should die who was so marvellously equipped for life, to whom life was so natural a thing, so inconceivable a wonder, to whom the hour of dark brought perfect sleep, and the hour of dawn the absolute joy of awakening, a being so ecstatically alive that he seemed to have been made to live for ever : is there any darker surprise than that in all the crime, sorrows, and disasters of the world ? To explain

For Api

what death is would be to explain why the laws of nature are unjust, cruel, and consistently treacherous.

Sometimes I say to myself, How great a burden of love is taken off my heart! The scales are even now; there is nothing to weigh down one or the other. It is horrible to have one's heart in an even balance. It is the average way of being happy.

While he lived, our lives were filled with little cares, fears, solitudes. Our vitality was doubled, every day had its anxieties, its good ending; one's sense of being became more sensitive, occupied outside itself by the energy and surprise of a life lived in our company, nearer and more helpless than a child, a delight, a wonder, an inspiration of living. The world was alive: every day was worth living for. Now that all is gone, life relapses into its old monotony.

I AM no philosopher, but I have a passion for the absolute. All my happiness has come about because I am never content unless my few desires are minutely satisfied. I have never understood what a compromise was, or making the best of things if those things were all I wanted ; or, indeed, any concession to circumstances. What I envy, or would envy if I could conceive myself different from what I am, are the people who do not mind, or only in small things. The small things do not exist for me, but how terribly a few things do. Rage consumes me if I do not possess their ultimate essence. As for all else, my mind is a happy blank, and I am generally supposed to be heartless, passionless, and indifferent.

Is there reason why one's love for a dog is so like what one's love may be for a woman, that they are so near a part of the earth, and so have a kind of wonder for us, and a desire for impossible possession ? Both are in their way helpless and speechless, and touch us by what is unconscious in them, and a savour that does not seem to us, judging by ourselves, quite human. They draw out of us all our love and all our cruelty. To possess them may be an anguish ; but to be without them is not to live at all.

SONGS FOR API

I

THEY tell me that I make my songs
Only of sorrowful old things,
And that the voice of joy belongs
By divine right to him who sings.

My singing-time has not begun
While I can say it is the day,
For I am idle in the sun
Until the sun has passed away.

And then I turn and look within,
As the world vanishes from me,
And in my twilight brain I spin
These cobwebs out of memory.

II. FOR API

(TO THE CARE OF HIS MISTRESS)

O DARK angel, who shall tell,
Api the irresistible,
All there is in you to praise,
The invention of your ways ?
You are black and smooth and small,
And have hardly teeth at all,
Yet what fierce and fond delighting
In the ecstasy of biting ?
You are gentle, yet you bark
At a footstep in the dark ;
You are wilful, wanton, wild,
As the April-hearted child,
And like his, your naughtiness
Doubles your deliciousness.
True, you are so tiny that
Dogs mistake you for a cat,
Yet what worth could bigness give
To a just diminutive ?
Long-haired, larger dogs may be
Full of grace and gaiety,
But could such aspire to share
The distinction of your air,
Or be, with servile tail complete,
Half so compact or half so sweet ?

III. NURSERY SONG

(FOR API)

WINDMILL, windmill, why are you still ?
I stand or stay at the wind's will ;
When the wind wills I grind if I can,
But I wait on the will of the miller-man.

Little avails if there's naught to grind,
The miller-man and the will of the wind ;
And it's then at the will of God that I
Set arms akimbo and stare at the sky.

IV. TO API

ON HIS SLEEPING

API, shut your little eyes,
Reach no more
After swallows, swifts, and flies,
As they soar,
Here's the grass for a green bed,
Leave the sheep,
Lay your black and shining head
Down, and sleep.

Little winds shall over you
As they pass
With white petals cover you
And the grass.
And your feet shall stir and seem
To be still
Haunting rabbits in a dream
Up the hill.

Black and comely, lie and rest,
One bright hour,
Like a lovely thing caressed
By a flower.
Then come back from Paradise
For our sake ;
Open your enchanted eyes,
Api, wake !

V

THE woman and the little black dog sit
 Beside the fire, on either side of it ;
 He on his crimson cushion, and she lies
 Back in her chair ; I look into their eyes,
 And see in them, as in a well or pool,
 Something strange, silent, loving, wonderful.
 The eyes speak : who shall answer what they mean ?
 Is it but in the pool that I have seen
 A moment's beauty pass, or does there dwell
 A deeper gleam of wisdom in the well ?

VI. HIS BODY

His little body, full
Of love, more beautiful
Than that
Of any cat ;

A little body such
That it is good to touch
And tell
The wild-beast smell ;

A body soft and fleet
On little leaping feet
That trace
Circles in space,

And, ceasing suddenly,
Assume the ecstasy
They keep
In perfect sleep ?

Is like a black and rose
Jewel, a flower that grows
Afresh
A flower in flesh.

VII. THE QUESTION

SACRED body that lay down
Meekly in this room to die,
Shall we weep for you and drown
Our eyes dry ?

Or give thanks to God who gave
Us to you and you to us,
And the life we could not save
Took back thus ?

VIII. A LAMENT OF THE LIVING THINGS FOR API

ALL

WEEP for Api ; he is dead.

THE BIRDS

We, the little birds, do weep,
For we fear he will not sleep.
He would spring into the air
Almost up to where we were
Swaying on a lowly bough.
How can he be quiet now ?

THE FLOWERS

We, the Flowers, will weep for him
And put on our mourning dim ;
We poor roses soon will be
As far out of the sun as he :
Winter, speak, and say we gave
Our last petals to his grave.

THE SHEEP

Little sheep, we have forgot
That he we weep for loved us not.
We were shy and he, being gay,
Drove us with little fears away ;
Now we have no need to fear
We will weep and wish him here.

A Lament of the Living Things for Api

THE GRASS

We that are the breath of grass
Sigh for him ; for he would pass
Like the calling winds and greet
Our bowed heads with gentle feet.
Where our green leaves make his bed,
Water us with the tears you shed.

THE TREES

We in our airy anthem sing
Dirges for his burying.
Our old limbs it was that made
Covered beds for him with shade :
Now the young apple-tree must grow
Shade for him he did not know.

ALL

Weep for Api ; he is dead.

X

I AM content that Api's dying eyes
Had no reproach in them, but the dear last look
Of love and confidence, and no surprise,
And deep content from my deep discontent he took.

XI

WHY is it my tears
 Drop on the stony road ?
 No days nor years
 To lighten my load ?
 When I remember his feet
 In the woods, on the road,
 It is my sorrow I meet,
 And I carrying my load.



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